

You Remind Me of My Cat by RichiesToesHurt

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - No Pennywise (IT), Beverly Marsh & Richie Tozier Are Best Friends, Bill Denbrough & Eddie Kaspbrak Are Best Friends, Bisexual Disaster Richie Tozier, Bisexual Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak Loves Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak is a Mess, Eventual Smut, Fluff and Smut, Gay Eddie Kaspbrak, M/M, Minor Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Reddie, Richie Tozier Loves Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier is a Mess, Richie Tozier works for SNL, Slow Burn, Sonia Kaspbrak's A+ Parenting, Stanley Uris is Richie's Step brother, Tooth-Rotting Fluff

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

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Summary:

Richie adopts a cat, Eddie has a dog, each of them gravitate towards the human equivalent of their best friend.

or

Richie works for Saturday Night Live and Eddie is an ER nurse, here is a story about them falling in love.

Tags are subject to change as the story progresses.

1. Meatball

“Bev, she said I needed a *companion*... like a pet or something.” Richie recited his therapy meeting from that morning. Bev worked a comb through his unruly curls as they chatted before Richie had to perform.

“Well that could be fun Richie!” She exclaimed as she parted his hair down the middle to braid it to lay under the variety wigs he had to wear that night. “Do you know what *kind* of pet you want?”

“I don’t know honestly...I feel like it should be like a dog or a cat.” Richie took his glasses off and quickly popped his contacts in as Bev tugged at his hair.

“I feel like you should get a dog, you two would relate to each other on so many levels” she giggled.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean!?” Richie scoffed as he turned his head to look at her face straight on rather than in the mirror in front of them.

“Well for one, cats don’t let their fur get so nasty that it takes thirty fuckin’ minutes to comb out.” She tugged on his hair to deflect his gaze back at the mirror in front of them to continue her work.

“Well maybe that’s all the more reason to get a cat!” Richie laughed “I might be able to learn a few things.”

“Something to consider for sure...” Bev chuckled as she tied off the second braid and walked away to find the wig that Richie was to wear first.

Richie took the moment alone to take a few deep breaths. He was mentally exhausted from his therapy session this morning so he knew it would be a rough one tonight. Working for Saturday Night Live was something that Richie was always grateful to have the opportunity to do, but nights like these really proved how important it was for people to care about their mental health. Richie learned this the hard way when he spent a whole semester of college drinking

and hooking up with just about anyone who looked at him. It was Bev who walked him to the counselor at school and told him to *just try it out, if you hate it well go smoke a joint, and if you love it we'll still smoke a joint*. Richie ended up feeling a sense of almost *relief* when he left the meeting, he felt a weight almost lift off of his chest. He felt good talking to someone that he didn't have to see every day and someone who was separate from the people he was supposed to be happy for all the time. Talking to his stepbrother Stan helped sometimes, but Stan was busy doing bigger and better things at Penn State, Richie was so fucking happy for him that he got into his dream college, but he really missed his brother that semester. Their families collided when Richie's mother met Stan's dad when they were both five, Richie's dad passed away when he was two and Stan's mother simply left them when he was three. Richie wouldn't have wanted to grow up with anyone else...

Richie gazed at himself in the mirror, he was wearing a dark brown pinstripe suit for his first skit, he was supposed to host a fake gameshow, it was a new skit they were testing out this week. He essentially was to present people with someone they were *vaguely* familiar with and see if they could recite their name. It was a funny idea they have been bouncing around for a while now, playing on the idea of how people talk to their doorman or their wife's friends all the time and never can remember their names. He was nervous since he was to be the host but at the same time, he felt excitement. He was still relatively new to the show and he was delighted that they were ready to use him for more prominent roles.

He was pulled from his trance by Bev shoving a wig on his head, completing the ensemble and hence marking him ready for his performance.

"Go get em tiger" Bev slapped his shoulders, partially to indicate he had to get the fuck out of her chair and also to calm his senses and physically bring him back down to earth from his cloud of anxiety she knew he always got stuck in before a show.

Richie smiled at her and walked to meet up with the rest of the cast. Bev landing a job as one of the costume people for the show was simply the universe doing them a massive favor, for each of them to have landed a job directed towards their dream career *together* almost

immediately after graduating college was nothing less than a miracle. They were in New York City after all.

The show that night couldn't have gone better. Richie was satisfied with his performance and everyone seemed to enjoy the new skit. Though it wasn't the funniest thing in the world it sounded like everyone was looking forward to writing another one. Though the show was still going on, Richie was officially done for the night. He stood in front of Bev's mirror and combed his fingers through his hair to unravel the braids. If his hair was a mess before the braids, it was a fuck show now, he laughed at the insane mess of his sweaty hair and decided it was best hidden. He tied it into a knot at the crown of his head, then slumped on the chair and took his contacts out, then lazily spun in the chair waiting for Bev to finish up whatever the fuck she was doing.

He thought more about what Brenda said this morning, he intentionally set his bi-monthly meetings to Saturday mornings simply because they were the most stressful days of his week and talking to his therapist usually helped him to calm some nerves. However, this morning they really dug into some repressed feelings that Richie had. They talked about each of his past relationships which was something that stung.

He brought up Tammy, who he dated in high school for six months, the longest he's ever been with someone. She was sweet and nice, and he lost his virginity to her but she dumped him for making a joke about her mom. Then there was Felicity, who he connected with in a film class in his freshman year of college, it was a blissful three months until she dumped him because he was '*a lot to handle*' whatever the fuck that meant. Then finally, they discussed Josh, this one stung the most because *Josh* dumped the fuck out of him because he found out that Richie was bisexual. This one *hurt*, not because Josh was super fun or good in bed or anything but because it ended because of something that Richie barely understood himself. Richie spend his dating/sex life gravitating towards both genders, he never really stopped to think about a label until Josh said it out loud. They were simply talking about their exes and Josh was apparently put off by the fact that most of Richie's were girls. Their breakup was framed

around the fact that Richie was bisexual, and ever since he has been almost afraid of the term. It was hard for him to explain how he felt to people when the only word that perfectly described it had such a negative connotation.

He felt as if he was destined to be lonely forever, jealous to the fact that just about everyone he knew managed to have at least one relationship happen for longer than a year. Sure, sex was good, but it was temporary, Richie craved the feeling of love. He felt he could never earn the feeling from someone else on the level of intimacy he craved. Sure, he loved Bev, and Bev loved him but that was a different kind of love. Their relationship may have begun on a hookup, but they evolved into something totally different.

He wanted someone to worship, he wanted someone he could cuddle to sleep, he wanted someone he could kiss, he wanted to run his fingers through someone's hair and kiss them goodnight. It was almost as if he had a meter in his body to measure the amount of love he had to give, and it was about to burst and absolutely smother the first person he sets his heart towards. He wanted someone to love and simply *needed* someone to love him back.

He didn't realize his eyes were closed until he felt someone kick his shoe. Bev was shrugging her coat on and fastening her purse over her shoulder when Richie opened his eyes.

"Fucking finally" Richie sighed in a joking tone.

"You don't have to walk me home you know" Bev said as she walked towards the door.

Richie jogged to catch up with her "I know, I just like looking at Ben."

Bev laughed as Richie nudged her shoulder.

"You have to get laid Tozier, I'm sick of living in fear of you eating my Fiancé."

"No thanks honestly. I think I'm sick of hooking up with random people." Richie was tired, which meant everything that crossed his

mind came out of his mouth.

“Wow, okay... where the fuck is all of this coming from may I ask? This is coming from the same Richie Tozier who once spent an entire semester sleeping at someone else’s house each week?”

“I don’t know, I just want it to mean something you know?”

Bev smiled at him and looped her arm through his and rested her head on his shoulder as they walked.

“We’ll find you someone Richie, I know we will.”

“Hey, speaking of, are you coming with me to find a friend tomorrow?”

“Fuck yes I am!” Bev smiled and shimmied a little in excitement.

Eddie was in bliss, jogging with his dog was always something he loved spending his mornings doing. He usually saved a good portion of his Sundays to spend one on one time with her. Winnow has always been the light of his life since Bill brought her home to their tiny shared apartment nearing two years ago when they were in the midst of obtaining a college degree. Eddie was super fucking confused as to why Bill thought it would be a good idea to bring home a golden retriever puppy when he knew damn well their apartment was small as hell and they were both *busy* as hell but Eddie could not say no to her precious caramel brown eyes framed by fiery auburn hair. Bill claimed that he would take her out once an hour, train her and walk her all the time but it ended up being Eddie who did all of those things. Winnow simply gravitated towards Eddie, she would follow him around the house and would even sleep with him in his bed, he was a little put off by it at first because of the *doggie germs* but he grew to love her in return and wouldn’t have it any other way. There was a strange atmosphere in the apartment in the months leading up to when their lease was ending, and they were

to each move out into separate living situations. They enjoyed being roommates for college, but Bill wanted to move deeper into the city and Eddie needed to move closer to the hospital he was supposed to start his nursing career in. Though Bill was the one to bring Winnow home and name her, they both knew that she was Eddie's dog. So, when Eddie moved into his new beautiful apartment with a spacious grassy courtyard, he took Winnow with him.

Eddie smiled to himself as he reflected on their beginnings, all the while maintaining a good jogging pace as he rounded the corner of the block towards their apartment, Winnow obediently at his side, her pink slack leash tied around the belt of Eddie's red fanny pack he wore to jog. It conveniently held his keys, phone and a few waste bags for Winnow. He slowed their pace to a walk as they neared the apartment building. Winnow naturally fell into a pace slightly ahead of Eddie but she knew not to put tension on the leash. She frequently turned her head to check on Eddie as they walked, almost to make sure he was still there. Eddie couldn't help but smile at her each time she did so, he rewarded her with a pat on the head when she turned to walk up the steps to the entrance to their apartment building.

Eddie unlocked the door and lead them through the stairwell to their apartment on the second floor. He was very proud of his apartment, happy that he managed to save enough money through college to afford a place relatively decent, most of his money for college was left to him from his Dad who passed away when Eddie was twelve. He was thankful that he didn't have to pay for much of his college career and in turn was able to afford a nice place after graduation.

Once they were inside the apartment Eddie unclipped the leash from Winnow's creamsicle orange collar and kicked off his shoes. He filled himself a glass of cold water from the fridge and drank as Winnow lapped from her water dish on the ground. He poured what he didn't drink into her bowl and she wagged her tail as he did so.

Eddie placed his glass into the dishwasher and started it before walking into his bedroom to shower and prepare for work later that day. He worked as an ER nurse at a local hospital close to a popular strip of bars, they mostly tended to get a lot of people coming in for heart attacks and bar fights. Eddie enjoyed his job because he felt like he was really helping people, which he loved. Growing up in the

situation he had with his mother was a furious mental battle, he believed for so long that he was delicate and allergic to the world, it wasn't until college that he really realized that he wasn't fragile at all, he found out a lot of things about himself in college. Some of which he planned to repress for the rest of his life and never allow the secret to greet the light of day. He couldn't help the way he felt about some of the boys on his college track team. Though people in New York seemed to be a lot more accepting compared to the people in Derry, he was still afraid to allow his true colors to shine, especially to explain himself to his mother, who he knew had a vendetta against their homosexual neighbors for what appeared to Eddie was no reason at all as he was growing up. He always almost admired what they had, he thought their cars were cool and their house was nice and that *they* were nice, he couldn't understand what his mother thought was wrong with them until he got older.

He shed his clothes and placed them into the wicker hamper before stepping into the shower, he always enjoyed showering, there was a point in his life when it was his favorite part of the day. He loved the feeling of getting clean and afterwards *being* clean. Eddie was simply a person who craved cleanliness. Working at the ER was pure struggle at first because of this fact, he luckily found himself not really caring about someone else's blood spewing onto the floor or onto his own exposed skin, or the visual of someone profusely leaking a variety of bodily fluids after suffering a drug overdose. In moments like these Eddie found himself craving a shower instead of cursing the person expelling the germs. Progress was good, progress was something Eddie had the pleasure of meeting during these years away from his mother Sonia. Progress was something Eddie loved.

They walked through the kennel portion of the shelter, stopping at each dog to greet them and deliver a milk bone. Richie didn't feel much of a connection to any of the dogs there, but he was enjoying his time interacting with them. Most of them were extremely frightened and some of them were super excited to see them, Richie had a moment of regret about coming to the shelter to begin with

because he felt terrible for all of them. He wanted to firsthand make sure of each of them finding a loving forever home.

Bev could tell that Richie wasn't clicking with the dogs there, so she tugged at his sleeve to encourage him towards the cat room. They couldn't really talk much because of how loud it was in the kennel, just about every dog there would bark at them until they walked up to their cage to greet them. Richie understood what the tug on his sleeve was supposed to mean and followed her to the cat room.

Upon entering, they were greeted by two huge cages that were made with intention to be outdoor dog kennels but the shelter instead used them for what they called "community rooms" in each of the rooms there were 6-7 cats housed there with intention to showcase their cats that are great with others and should probably be adopted into a home with other cats. Lining the walls of the rest of the room were hundreds of cat cages, and about seventy five percent of them were full.

The two leisurely walked the perimeter of the room, peeking into each cage to greet each cat. Richie got caught up in front of a cat who appeared to be badly injured. The hocks of both of his back legs were extremely skinned up, his fur on his legs and tail has been shaved away leaving only the tip of his tail with a fluffy puff of fur. He was entirely gray, and he was supposed to have long fur, evident from the almost lions mane that was stuffed into a small e-collar to prevent him bothering his injuries. This cat had Richie's heart almost wrecked. Despite his injuries, the cat managed to stand up and walk to the front of his cage, grazing his body against the cage bars. Richie used his finger to scratch at his side and felt him purr, Richie couldn't help but smile.

Bev noticed the interaction and scurried over placing an arm around Richie's crouched form.

"Well who's this?" She reached for the cage card that Richie paid no mind to until now. "Richie his name is Meatball, that is fucking precious."

"Bevvie look, he's so hurt" Richie was still scratching at the spot-on Meatball's neck underneath the cone as Bev leaned over to get a look

at Meatball's state.

Bev frowned as she looked at his back legs, it looked super painful. "I wonder how that happened."

A silence fell over them as Meatball pushed his head against the cage bars for Richie to scratch at his ears. Richie felt his heard twang and his eyes almost welled up with tears, he felt inclined to call the hunt for a friend completed and simply take Meatball home.

Their moment was interrupted when one of the Kennel Staff members greeted them. "Hi, I'm Ashley and I am one of the adoption counselors here. Are you interested in meeting our lovely Meatball?"

"Hell, yes we are" Bev chuckled as Richie stood and backed away from the cage a little.

"Wonderful!" Ashley laughed as she opened the cage.

Bev reached in and started to pet meatball and though he seemed to enjoy it, he inched closer to Richie.

"Rich I think he likes you honey" Bev leaned and nudged him with her shoulder. Richie smiled at her and started scratching at Meatball's head.

"So, do you guys know what happened to him?" Richie directed his question towards Ashley who was rolling over a few chairs.

"Not entirely but we know there were nasty people involved so it really could have been anything, it took him a little while to feel comfortable with us interacting with him, but as you can tell he's really come around." Ashley smiled and motioned for them to sit in the chairs she brought over.

"How long has he been here?" Bev asked as they sat.

"He's been with us for just under a month I believe. His injuries used to be heaps worse than it is now, but we have a veterinarian on staff, she's done a great job at keeping him comfortable and preventing his injuries from worsening during his time here."

“Poor baby...” Bev sighed as she draped her arm around Richie’s back.

“So what’s your guys living situation like? Are there any other people or animals living in the home?”

“No its just me, all alone. Bev here went and got engaged to someone else.” Richie chuckled.

“Well that makes my job a little easier” Ashley laughed then turned to walk away to get something.

Bev took advantage of their moment alone. “Hey what are you thinking?”

“I don’t know Bev, I think I really like him, but I’m worried about his legs” Richie frowned and leaned back in his chair.

Meatball cautiously reached a paw out of the cage and tested his weight on Richie’s lap before crawling out onto his thighs. Richie smiled and scratched at the spot where his cone rested on his neck.

“Well I don’t think you have a choice... he seems to want to go home with you.” Bev chuckled.

“I guess I don’t huh” Richie laughed.

“Okay if I could just have you guys fill this out” she handed Bev a clipboard “it is basically just telling us where you live and who’s in the home and all that kind of stuff for our records.”

Bev smiled at her then got to work filling out all of the information that she could without consulting Richie too much, she didn’t want to tear his attention away from his bonding with Meatball. Ashley left yet again, to go get something else.

“Richie what’s your street number again?”

“165 I think?”

“Here you have to sign” she handed him the pen and held the clipboard to allow Richie to sign the paper.

Ashley set up an x-pen on the ground close by, she laid a sheet down on the floor to protect Meatball from being exposed the germs on the ground. Then, she threw a bunch of toys on the ground on top of the sheet and walked back over to Richie and Bev.

“May I?” She motioned towards Meatball on Richie’s lap to see if it was okay to pick him up and put him in the pen.

“Yeah go for it” Richie chuckled as Ashley scooped Meatball into her arms, careful to avoid touching his back legs.

Meatball meowed, low and kind of pissed off. Bev smirked and looked at Richie, worried about what Richie would think about Meatball expressing himself.

“The man isn’t afraid to speak his mind Bevvie, I think that’s a quality we can all learn from” Richie giggled and elbowed her before standing up to walk over to Ashley and Meatball who was now in the x-pen sniffing at the sheet and toys on the ground.

“You’re welcome to step in there with him, I’ll give you guys a minute alone with him, I’ll be right over there when you’re ready” Ashley motioned towards a desk at the front of the room.

“Okay, thank you so much” Bev beamed at her and handed her the clipboard.

Ashley smiled and turned to walk away.

Richie and Bev stepped into the x-pen and sat on the ground. Meatball started to kick around a plastic ball with a bell inside of it. Richie flicked it when it came towards him and Meatball tried his best to pounce on it, but it was more of a flop onto his side because of his injuries.

“One day you’ll be strong enough to catch *birds* little man” Richie laughed as he scratched Meatballs head.

Meatball rolled onto his back and started batting at his hand. Richie laughed as he wiggled his fingers to encourage the bad behavior.

“What a little shit” Bev giggled and passed Richie a wand toy to play

with instead of his hand.

“I know, isn’t it great” Richie smiled already in love with Meatball.

Bev smiled and watched Richie play with him. She could see how much Richie was enjoying Meatball and she felt satisfied with the idea of them taking him home today, but in the end, it was really up to Richie. They sat in silence for a few minutes, enjoying their time with Meatball and each considering the decision that loomed in the air.

“So what do you think?” Bev broke the silence.

“I don’t know, I’m kind of obsessed with him” Richie tossed a stuffed mouse toy to the space in front of Meatball, who immediately smacked the mouse triggering an electronic squeak sound. “But, I’m still worried about his legs, like what if they get infected or something and he’s in a bunch of pain and shit.”

Bev sighed and allowed them to fall into a silence again as she watched Meatball leisurely strut around the pen and flop his body down on the ground. She watched as Richie smiled at him and fiddled with one of the stuffed mice.

Richie watched as Bev stood and walked over to Ashley at her desk, they exchanged a few words and then Ashley left the room and Bev returned to the x-pen.

“What was that about?”

“She’s going to get the Vet to talk to you” Bev smiled as she sat back down.

“Oh, okay that’s cool” Richie was pretty nervous about the whole thing, he didn’t know the first thing about how to medically care for a situation like this. He was falling in love with this cat who desperately needed someone to care, needed someone to love him after all he’s been through. Richie craved to be that person, but he was worried he would entirely fuck the situation, he was afraid he’d do something wrong along the way and it scared the shit out of him.

Just as Richie’s train of thought was starting to derail, the

Veterinarian walked in holding a clipboard with Ashley at her side.

“Hi, I’m Dr. Kate, I have Meatball’s medical report here so let me just run through this for you. Okay so one of our humane officers brought him in on March seventh...” as she said this Bev gasped and turned to Richie, catching just about everyone off guard.

“Richie that’s your birthday!” She shook his arm. “It’s a sign!”

Everyone chuckled a bit and Richie smirked and leaned to release his arm from Bev’s death grip.

“...and then on that same day we started his antibacterial dips to begin his healing process. His wounds were pretty badly infected when he first came in, we were considering amputation for his left back leg, but he impressed us all with his ability to fight off the infection. We also started to dose him for the pain then as well, which if you choose to adopt today, we’ll send you home with a full script. We continued to do his daily antibacterial dips up until about a week ago, where we wrapped his back legs up for a few days to encourage some fresh growth and prevent too much scabbing. We took the bandages off just a few days ago and did another antibacterial dip for good measure.” Dr. Kate pushed her reading glasses up to rest on the top of her head and held the clipboard at her side before continuing. “This little guy sure has been through a lot, and I would feel comfortable if you know that when he first came in we had to muzzle him in order to perform his medical tasks, Ashley as well as the rest of our kennel staff has done a great job at socializing him, but he still has some over stimulation issues.”

“Don’t we all though?” Richie chuckled and looked around the group, everyone gave him a bit of a smile.

“If you do decide to take him home and he gives you trouble please feel free to give us a call, we have a few behavior specialists here on staff as well and they would be more than happy to help you through any problems.” Ashley chimed in.

“I would also like to mention that though we would love to provide veterinary care for every animal that we adopt out, we simply cannot afford to do that, so you would be responsible for Vet visits and what

not.” Dr. Kate expressed with a cautious expression.

“Oh no- yeah that a given right?” Richie waved her off.

“It could be expensive and I know a lot of people can’t afford to provide things like that for their pets so I always just like to put it out there” Dr. Kate seemed to be relieved to be explaining herself to a person who seemed to have an understanding as to how animal shelters worked, she’s obviously had her fair share of members of the public expecting the world from the organization.

“That shouldn’t be a problem, he’s like totally loaded on his SNL money” Bev joked, she always mentioned the fact that Richie was one of the SNL cast members at any chance she saw fit, mostly because she was proud but she also enjoyed seeing Richie get flustered.

“I knew I recognized you from somewhere” Ashley said.

“Y-yeah I’m not like one of the *main* guys or anything-”

“*YET!*” Bev cut him off.

“Jesus Christ shut *up Beaverly!*” Richie chuckled and lightly pushed her shoulder. Meatball stood up and scurried over to bat at Richie’s bracelets as they jingled in front of Bev, jumping on her lap in the process.

“Aww Richie look at him, he fits right in” Bev giggled as Richie encouraged Meatball by jiggling his wrist.

“Okay fine, yes I’ll take him” Richie sighed sarcastically, smiling as Meatball jumped off of Bev’s lap to attack Richie’s shoelace “but I’m changing his name, *meatballs ain’t shit without no spaghetti.*”

2. Fake Bottles

Notes for the Chapter:

TW in end notes!

Getting Bowie into the carrier was a hassle and a half to say the least. Richie felt his heart pang at each *yowl* that Bowie chimed through the whole process. They now sat in the back of an Uber on their way to their first ever vet visit, Richie nervously smiled to himself as Bowie growled and yowled in his box on the seat next to him.

After a few awkward conversations and a ‘thanks, see ya man’ Richie was walking towards the entrance of the Vet office. It was a lovely facility to say the least, one of the three that had five stars in his area, as he walked to the front desk he was delighted with his choice. There were a few other people there one of which also had a cat carrier and two others had dogs, none of them paid much mind to Richie as he walked in. The walls were a pale blue and the floor was a white sterile appearing tile. The walls were decorated with framed posters and there were benches lining the walls and even a spot in the corner with a doll house and a few coloring books for children to entertain themselves while they waited.

Richie checked them in and settled into a seat underneath a poster that read ‘Save a Paw, Don’t Declaw’ in front of a photo of an orange cat. Richie glanced into Bowies cage and saw the most pissed off face he’s ever seen in his life staring back at him.

“Sorry man, I know this sucks, you’ll be out of here soon” Richie stuck his finger through the front of the cage expecting nothing but the death glare in return, and that’s just what he got. Richie flashed him a weak smile and leaned back in his chair to wait for Bowie’s name to be called. As he did so he checked his phone to see that he got a few texts in a group chat he must have just been added to with members from the cast. It was the tight knit group of the arguably most popular cast members plus a few others they seemingly were testing the waters with. It was the main group of the genius brains who came up with most of the ideas Annie, Tommy, Nick, John, Fred, and Natalie. Then they seemed to have added Richie, Steve, and

Kristin (the three newest members).

Annie [10:39] : Do you guys want to meet up to shoot the shit about skit ideas tonight

Steve [10:40] : I'm down... drinks or what?

Annie [10:40] : I'm cool with drinks how about Grey Gate at 7? Its Monday so there shouldn't be too many crazy asses out tonight

Tommy [10:42] : down as hell

Nick [10:42] : I'll be there

John [10:42] : I'm down

Fred [10:43] : I wont be able to make it sorry, dinner with the wife's parents and what not.

Natalie [10:43] : See you guys then!

Richie glanced to Bowie then back to his phone, he was happy with how quickly Bowie had settled into his home so far, however he was restricted temporarily to his master bathroom of which Stan cleaned *extensively* as soon as Bev called him when Richie was going through paperwork with Ashley.

“Stan okay, so Richie is bringing home a cat with a few open wounds and the adoption counselor said we should restrict him to a room for a little while as he settles in so could you go to Richie's apartment and pick a room to clean?”

“On it.” Was all Stan had to say before hanging up and jumping at the opportunity to deep clean a portion of Richie's apartment. He inquisitively chose the bathroom because of the ability of things to be properly sterilized and kept that way.

Richie felt bad about having Bowie stay in the bathroom but the thought of it only being temporary comforted him. Bowie hadn't been home for two hours before he both used his litter-box and snuggled into a fluffy blue bed that Bev picked out for him. Richie decided that

Bowie would be fine left alone for a few hours while he went out.

Richie [11:00] : I'll be there

Just as Richie hit send, he heard Bowie's name being called. He stood at the sound and followed the woman who introduced herself as Jenny down the hall and into a room. She gestured for Richie to place Bowie's carrier on the counter as she prepared a few things for their visit.

"Okay, so what brings us in today?"

"Well I just adopted him yesterday and he has a few injuries that we have to be on top of. Also, he probably is due for a bunch of shots and stuff right?" He handed her the folder they sent him home with when he finalized the adoption yesterday which detailed his medical records.

"Oh okay perfect" she replied as a thank you to Richie's offering of the information she needed to enter into the computer. "Let me go ahead and put this into his chart so we can start figuring out what he needs today."

"Sounds perfect" Richie leaned against the counter and peered into Bowie's cage, his big green eyes were frantically searching his surroundings through the openings on the sides of the cage.

"If I could just have you fill out some of this paperwork really quick so we can get all of this office work out of the way." She placed a clipboard with a few papers on the desk and handed him a pen.

"Even better." Richie smiled at her as he settled into one of the seats to get to work on his paperwork.

Jenny finished her work first and continued to prepare a few supplies that the vet would be using. As soon as Richie was done, she collected his clipboard.

"Alright so he's due for 3 vaccines, rabies, trivalent, and his FVRCP, would you like me to go through them or are you comfortable with us administering?"

“Yeah that’s fine what ever he needs just go right ahead.” Richie nodded.

“Alright I’ll get those drawn up for you and I’ll be right back in with the Vet.” She smiled at him as she left through a door that lead to a secret back room where Richie assumed, they did most of their work.

Richie returned the smile and stood back up to check on Bowie. When Richie looked into the cage, Bowie stood and tried to walk around, but his e-collar caught on the wall of the cage and scared him half to death.

“You deserve a whole ass salmon feast after this huh bud” Richie sighed.

They didn’t have to wait much longer for the vet, Jenny returned with the Veterinarian who addressed himself as Dr. Keene.

“Okay so I hear we have some wounds I have to look at?” Dr. Keene said as he washed his hands at the sink in the room.

“Yeah, so the backs of his legs are pretty messed up to say the least, the shelter was doing a good job at caring for them so they’re not infected or anything” Richie explained as he opened the cage and tried to coax Bowie out of by tapping his fingers on the counter. “He also has some handling issues.”

“Okay, that shouldn’t be a problem, I’d like to try and get a good look at these wounds before we stress him out with everything else then.”

They all stood around the counter and waited for Bowie to step out of the cage. Richie took off one of his bracelets and threw it in front of the cage as a last-ditch effort to see if he’ll go for it. The plan worked as Bowie came out of the cage to swipe the bracelet off the counter.

Dr. Keene bent every which way assessing the wounds on Bowie’s legs, at one point scratching his back to get him to stop moving around for a second. Richie stepped away from the counter a little, not wanting to get in the way of his assessment, slipping his bracelet back on as he did so.

“Okay so what I want to do for him is a daily topical antibiotic to

keep him on track of recovery and after each application I want his wounds wrapped up with some gauze.” Dr. Keene pet Bowie as he spoke in an obvious attempt to gain his trust before poking him with multiple needles. “I understand that he has some handling issues so we can walk you through how to do it before leaving today.”

“Okay that sounds good” Richie scratched at the back of his neck a little nervous about witnessing Bowie receive his shots.

Dr. Keene stopped petting Bowie and pulled out a thermometer to take his temperature, Richie felt sorry for his cat, understanding as to where the thermometer was supposed to go.

Jenny wrapped Bowie in a towel, leaving his back end exposed and gently held him close to the counter-top, restraining him safely. As Dr. Keene took his temperature, Bowie yowled and thrashed a little. Dr. Keene quickly administered the series of shots while he was held in this position as well.

“Okay we’ll let him cool down a little bit before wrapping up his legs for ya.” Dr. Keene smiled as he went to the back room to find the antibacterial cream. As he did so Jenny got to work pulling some gauze out of the cabinet above the sink as well as some medical tape.

Bowie lay on the counter hiding behind his cat carrier. Richie reached out a cautious hand to try to provide him some comfort. He gently raked his fingers along Bowie’s spine, Richie felt Bowie relax a little bit and decided to repeat the motion. After a second rake, Bowie walked closer to Richie, still crouched low to the ground. He settled into the angle that Richie’s abdomen made with the counter and tried to bury his face in Richie’s stomach, but his e-collar prevented him from doing this comfortably.

“Aww I’m sorry you got stabbed like four times bud.” Richie cooed as he reached into Bowie’s cone to scratch at the back of his neck.

Dr. Keene came back into the room with the tube of antibacterial cream in his hand. Jenny got to work rolling out the gauze and cutting a few strips of appropriate length.

“Alright, so all you really need is about half of a pea size amount for

each leg, you're going to use a cotton swab to apply it and then firmly wrap his legs with some gauze, don't do it too tight but you also don't want it sliding off of his legs. The process is vastly easier to do with two people."

Jenny pet Bowie a little bit before wrapping him in the towel again and picking him up and tucking the front half of his body underneath her right arm and cupped his abdomen in a way that caused his back legs to be held straight out in front of her towards Dr. Keene. They worked quickly as Dr. Keene squeezed a small amount of the topical onto a cotton swab and smeared it across one of Bowie's legs, a low growl erupted from the spot behind Jenny's armpit. Dr. Keene discarded the used cotton swab and did the same with a fresh one to his other leg, then he wrapped each of Bowie's legs securely with the gauze and fastened them with some medical tape. Jenny returned Bowie to his crate and pulled the towel out before shutting the door.

"And that's how its done" Dr. Keene said nodding at his colleague and Richie.

"Seems easy enough" Richie chuckled sarcastically.

"So I want you to do that every day for a week and I would like to see him back a week from now as well to verify things are healing smoothly and from there he should be good to heal on his own... and that e-collar can come off under supervision as well, as long as he's not messing with the bandages he should be fine to have a break from it for a while every day."

"Okay, that sounds good to me."

"Perfect, do you have any questions for me?"

"No, I don't think so" Richie smiled.

"Alright, I'll be on my way then, see you in a week!" Dr. Keene waved as he left to escape into the secret room.

As Jenny took care of some more paperwork for their vet visit that day, Richie ordered an uber to get home. Soon after, Richie was free to go after he paid for the visit and received the topical antibiotic.

Once they got home Richie kicked his shoes off and brought Bowie into the bathroom, setting the cage down and unlatching the door. He turned off the light and opened the blinds to allow the room to flood with natural light rather than artificial. He also sprinkled some cat nip on the ground in front of the opened cage door before leaving the room shutting the door behind him. He decided to give Bowie a moment alone to run to the corner store to pick up the gauze and medical tape.

Eddie shimmied a towel around his scalp, drying his hair off from his shower. He walked to his closet to pull out a matching set of dark blue scrubs and laid them on the bed, Winnow watched him from her Fluffy dog bed underneath the window in the corner of the room. Eddie pulled his clothes on and discarded the towel in the hamper in the bathroom, then combed his damp hair back away from his scalp and ran some product through with his fingers, effectively stifling the natural wave of his hair before it even had a chance to shine.

He worked an arguably shitty shift tonight, three to ten, which usually meant twelve, but considering the fact that it was a Monday night he hoped that it meant that the ER wouldn't be too busy. He glanced at the time as he fastened on his watch, two thirty. Before leaving he checked on Winnows automatic feeder to make sure there was enough food in the cartridge for her dinner. On his way out the door he clipped his name tag to the breast pocket of his scrubs and said goodbye to Winnow.

His walk to work was only about twenty minutes, once he got there he clocked in and walked to the employee lounge to discard his things in his locker. One of his favorite coworkers Lucy, gave him a rundown of all of the patients they had currently to catch Eddie up before leaving for the day. Lucy was a short young woman, she had short blonde curly hair and bright blue eyes, she was around Eddie's age and they bonded over their love for dogs and simply being new to the profession. There was a 'were in this together' dynamic between them which Eddie found comforting.

Eddie made his rounds, filling out some paperwork from the other day that he didn't have time for, and checked in a few patients. He thought to himself how chill and uneventful the night was framing

out to be and made mental plans to order take out and watch a movie on the couch with Winnow that night.

Richie pulled on his favorite purple hoodie to complete his outfit for the night. He wore his red Chuck Taylors, black skinny jeans with holes at the knees, and black v-neck tee underneath his worn purple hoodie.

He checked on Bowie one last time before leaving to hop into an uber to go to the bar, he was curled up in his cat bed fast asleep, exhausted from the emotional trauma he endured that morning. Richie smiled to himself as he gently closed the bathroom door and left his apartment.

*

He walked into the bar and easily found his group, they were one of only two groups in the entire place that night, the other being a group of three grown men sitting at the bar watching sports on the TV. Everyone greeted him happily, pleased with his arrival. The only seat left was between Steve and Tommy, so that's where Richie's ass made its home.

"Okay so we were just talking about trying to do some shit about Spiderman getting kicked out of Marvel or something." Natalie tried her best to fill Richie in on the most recent idea produced by the group. Which was hard to do because they each seemed to be talking about everything but work. "You know cus everyone's pissed about it."

"That could be funny, we could frame it like a shitty breakup or something and have Spiderman have a whole argument with someone from Disney." Richie said.

"Okay, yes this idea for sure has potential." Natalie pointed at Richie to emphasize her point of it being a good idea.

The night carried on pretty smoothly, everyone seemed to enjoy

Richie's sense of humor and they all got relatively tipsy in the process. Richie lost track of his own drinking and everyone seemed to be pretty wasted by the time 7:40 rolled around. They all drunkenly spewed ideas some good and some bad, Richie respected the way that even in their drunken state the group overall was good about agreeing on whether an idea was good or bad.

Between them all, Steve was the one to have had the most drinks. The cast took advantage of this and started to mess with his jaded mind.

"You know Steve, we were thinking of doing this skit about Tom Brady making out with his kids. We were thinking you could be Brady dude." Nick teased as he elbowed Steve.

"Nah dude, that's fuggin gross." Steve giggled as he finished the last of his beer, lazily slamming the empty brown bottle down on the table with a loud thud.

"Yeah fuck this table man!" Richie laughed and punched the table laughing.

A few others laughed, amused with the new game of fucking with Steve. Steve shot Richie a confused but amused expression.

"Just jokes man" Richie said draping an arm around Steve's shoulders.

"How about this sports theme, what'll happen when Mason Rudolph and Myles Garrett walk into a bar?" John said from across the table.

"B-BAR *fiiight!*" Steve yelled pounding his fists on the table. "Smashing bottles over each other's heads and shit..."

The few groups of people who trickled in within the past forty minutes or so turned to look at Steve.

"We'd have to get someone to order those fake bottles they use to do shit like that" Nick muttered into his glass.

"What? There's no such thing..." Steve slurred.

“Yes, there is dummy.” Richie giggled and chugged the rest of his beer.

Steve picked up his empty beer bottle and held it by its neck, swishing it around as if practicing to bash it onto someone’s head.

“No there’s not they just use these, cus like what a waste of glass and plastic and shit” Steve rambled as everyone nervously watched him thrash the bottle around.

“I don’t mean to burst your bubble man, but I swear they’re fake dude” Richie giggled and held up his hands to protect himself from the brown glass thrashing through the space around him. “However I really respect your consideration for the environment.”

“No, they’re *real* see!?” Steve hauled the bottle down towards Richie’s head, his hand shot up to protect his head from the blow, however upon the impact he felt thick shards of glass rain down around his body and felt warmth trail down the front of his wrist.

Richie held his hand in front of his face in shock, paying no mind to his coworkers harshly scolding Steve who was frantically running his hands through his hair and doing something on his phone. Richie felt a gentle hand grab his injured one and then another hand help him out of his chair.

“Come on hun let’s get goin’ to the ER” the voice was Annie’s, he felt his unharmed arm position around her shoulders, it was a good thing it was there too because Richie was about three steps away from falling over.

“I told ya they were fucking *fake*.” Was all Richie could think to say, even though Steve was entirely out of earshot.

“You sure told him buddy, you sure did.” Annie chuckled and pat Richie’s good hand which was lazily draped over her shoulder.

The walk to the ER was strange, many pedestrians were looking the two up and down however no one stopped to ask if they needed help in pure New York fashion. By the time the two arrived at the ER Richie’s entire sleeve of his hoodie was drenched in blood. He didn’t

properly look at his hand until Annie dropped him into one of the waiting room chairs to run up to the counter and speak to the secretary there. His palm was cut diagonally across the middle, slicing almost across the entire length from the base of his index finger to the bottom right corner of his left hand. Richie felt wheezy at the sight of it but the only thing on his mind were his worries about Bowie, he didn't know how he was going to change his bandages everyday by himself with two hands in mint condition let alone one completely injured.

Richie's mind raced and his eyes welled with tears, he wanted to do right by Bowie and now he's fucking screwed. He considered asking Bev to help but he knew how nervous she was about Bowie being too feisty with someone and doing some real damage which also in Richie's book/current state of mind ruled out Ben as well. Stan would never feel comfortable doing something like this and the rest of Richie's friends were mere acquaintances who have never even been to his home. Sober Richie would understand that Bev would have helped him at the drop of a dime, she has come to his rescue countless times over the years and that wouldn't change any time soon, however his current state of mind threw all logic to the wolves.

Richie closed his eyes and shook his head, dropping his hand to his lap and lolling his head forward, his hair shielded his face from onlookers which was comforting in a way, because he was crying. It took a lot for Richie to cry but right now was definitely one of those times. His intoxication could have something to do with it, but the idea of letting Bowie down and not providing the care he needed combined with the searing pain in his hand simply struck a nerve in Richie's emotions.

He felt a hand rub circles into his back and he knew it to be Annie, he thanked her for it in his head and leaned forward bringing his good hand up to peel his glasses off his face to prevent any tears from staining the frames.

"Richie Tozier?" Richie heard a man call.

Richie didn't look at the man, he merely stood and followed him through the double doors and into a chair with a paper sheet covering the plastic, on the boarder of the large room. The man

pulled a blue curtain around the perimeter of the space, encapsulating them in visual privacy. As he did so, Richie unfolded his glasses and pushed them onto his face, closing his eyes as he pushed them up his nose.

Richie opened his eyes and watched the figure in front of him. Time felt as if it was slowed, Richie's eyes admired a head of thick caramel brown hair, then they traveled to peer at the toned, tan bicep of the man's arm as it gripped the curtain, before his eye's could get too carried away with the view of the back of him, he turned around.

Richie's drunken state couldn't hold back the gasp that broke through his lips.

Notes for the Chapter:

TW: Mentions of blood and serious injury

I know that the vet visit isn't very accurate to real life, I'm not a veterinarian okay, please have mercy...

3. Fuckin Steve

Notes for the Chapter:

TW: See End Notes

Beautiful was the word that came to Richie's mind the second he saw the man's face, but the word simply wasn't enough. Richie noticed that the man's hair had a natural wave to it and a few of the wisps fell from its position combed away from his face and instead framed it. His thick and angular natural brows perfectly accentuated his caramel brown eyes. Freckles dusted his turned-up nose and cheekbones. The man blinked which almost sent a shiver down Richie's spine because his attention was then drawn to the man's long eyelashes and the way his angular jaw clenched.

The man cleared his throat and Richie closed his mouth that he didn't realize was open until now.

"My name is Eddie, I will be caring for you tonight." Eddie swiftly walked behind Richie's chair to grab a few pads of gauze. "Could you please recite to me your name, age, and birthday?" Eddie returned into Richie's view and glanced at his clipboard before gently reaching for Richie's injured hand.

Richie was thankful that the man was appearing to be avoiding eye contact. "Richie Tozier is the name, but you can call me babe, I'm freshly 25 and my birthday was on March 7th, don't worry I'm not mad you didn't get me anything, I'm really just enjoying our time together." Richie immediately cringed at himself not being able to control his intoxicated trash mouth. The gentle touch of Eddie's hand on his own sent sparks down his arm causing his heart rate to speed.

Eddie gave him a look that was best described as a worried smirk. "Well we know your mouth still works." Eddie chuckled "We gotta get this hoodie off." Eddie rolled back the bloody cuff of the purple hoodie to help Richie safely get the hoodie off without hurting his hand anymore.

"Eddie, I think our relationship is moving kinda fast, I'm already

undressing and you didn't even buy me dinner" Richie chuckled mostly to himself as Eddie gently tugged the sleeve over his hand. Richie snuck his hand through the sleeve to safely rest against his torso as he pulled the hoodie over his head. He shook his hair out of habit to fix any awkward kinks that may have formed through the ordeal. His eyes darted to Eddie's face to catch a smirk that vanished virtually the second Richie looked at him.

"Don't talk too sweet, you're probably gonna hate me when we're done here." Eddie chuckled, as he sat on a rolling stool and moved in front of Richie.

"Okay I doubt that but whatever" Richie's voice slurred.

"I have to take these off too... I hope you don't mind" Eddie motioned to Richie's various bracelets.

"Yeah that's fine" Richie shrugged and held his wrist up for Eddie to unfasten and slip off his variety of bracelets.

Eddie unclipped the gold linked bracelet first, then unfastened the few black cord bracelets with a few charms attached, and lastly stretched a black hair-tie to its limits to safely slide it over Richie's injured hand. Each of which was placed in Richie's good hand and safely stored in his front pocket.

Richie felt Eddie gently grab his wounded hand again, cradling it with both of his own and rolling it back and forth to assess the wound, occasionally pressing at the tips of Richie's fingers as he did so to access the wound better. Richie couldn't take his eyes away from Eddie's face as he did so, the way his brows scrunched to form a break in his forehead combined with the way his lips pursed ever so slightly as his mind searched for the best plan to go about helping Richie.

Luckily the bleeding was slower now, allowing Eddie time to assess the best possible way to go about the situation. Richie wouldn't be walking out of here without some kind of suture, that's for sure.

"Okay Richie you are going to need stitches." Eddie frowned slightly as his eyes met Richie's.

"Yeah I kinda figured." Richie scratched the back of his neck with his good hand as Eddie lightly set it other down on the metal table next to Richie's chair, then Eddie lay a few gauze pads on top of the wound.

"I'll be right back I just have to get the supplies." Eddie swiftly left through the crack in the curtains.

Richie dropped head to smack against the headrest of the chair.

"*Fuck...*" he said aloud to himself.

Bowie was screwed. Richie couldn't care for his wounds if his own life depended on it now. Richie's mind couldn't fathom even a single possible way to change Bowie's dressings on his own. He felt his eyes well up with tears and made no effort to shield his face or wipe them away. He stared into the ceiling, feeling absolutely defeated and stressed to all hell.

"Are you okay?" Eddie's voice sounded gentle.

"Nope" Richie said matter of factly, turning his head to smile at Eddie.

"It'll heal man, you'll be back to normal in no time" Eddie smiled at him slightly as he set the various supplies, all of which contained in sterile plastic packaging on the metal table by Richie's hand.

"No its not that, my cat is just fucked." Richie sighed as he pulled the collar of his shirt up to wipe his face.

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, loosing a pet sucks." Eddie said as he pulled on blue nitrile gloves.

"No-no...not like that he just..." Richie sighed before explaining his situation to Eddie. Through the explanation Eddie got to work opening the supplies and laying them out on sterile white hospital towels atop the metal table. Richie went into detail about how no one was available to help him which struck a nerve in Eddie's heart. Richie felt his tears stream down his face but he paid no mind to them.

Fuck.

Was all Eddie could think after Richie finished explaining his ordeal with his cat. Well that and *fuck he still looks pretty when he cries*. Eddie knew that he was going to end up offering to help with the cat, that's just who he was now, it was hard for him to ignore the situation. He imagined how helpless he would feel if the situation was him and Winnow and felt his heart throb at the thought.

Richie sat silently sniffing as Eddie got to work gently padding at the gash on Richie's palm with a few gauze pads.

"I mean I'm not doing anything tomorrow night..." Eddie gulped before finishing his offer "I could probably help you out." Eddie's eyes met with Richie's. They were quite literally ocean eyes, dark blue and utterly beautiful, glossy from the sadness that flood them. He watched a smile tug at the corners of Richie's mouth, crinkling the corners of his eyes ever so slightly.

"That's music to my ears Eds" Richie smiled.

"Yeah, yeah...lets see how you feel after I do all this" Eddie's hand scanned across the metal table to reference the medical needle and thread. "Also don't call me that." Eddie put on a fresh pair of gloves and watched Richie take a deep breath before shifting in his chair to settle deeper into it, crinkling the paper as he did so.

"This is gonna fucking hurt huh..." Richie flashed a worried look at Eddie.

"You fuckin bet" Eddie laughed lightly, surprised that he felt comfortable enough to drop his professionalism around Richie.

"Oh man I can't look I think" Richie chuckled and took off his glasses, slipping one of the temples into his shirt to drape over his chest. Eddie glanced at Richie's bare face and felt a strange sensation in his stomach, one he's never felt before upon the simple sight of someone.

Eddie shifted in his chair and leaned forward to start his work of properly cleaning the wound. He poured hydrogen peroxide over the wound, cringing as he did so, understanding the discomfort it was about to cause Richie. Richie reacted by smacking his good hand over his face, shielding almost the entirety of it, Eddie watched Richie's jaw clench, activating the face muscle there.

"It'll be over in like ten minutes, tops." Eddie said, trying to comfort Richie as best he could. He felt an inclination to do so similar to when he had to care for a child, an instinct to comfort, even though Richie was a full grown adult, *freshly* 25.

All Richie did was frantically shake his head up and down in agreeance.

Eddie took a deep breath as he applied the topical anesthetic as best he could along the wound. He knew it wouldn't make much of a difference because of the position and location of the wound.

"Okay I just put something on to try and numb the pain before I stitch it up." Eddie informed Richie who didn't move from his position. "It's going to still hurt like hell because there's like a thousand nerve endings around this location so if you have to throw up here's a trash can." Eddie lightly kicked the tin can on the ground close to Richie's feet.

Richie laughed and peeked through his hand at the can by his feet. "Noted."

Eddie readied the curved needle and thick black thread, he noticed Richie's eyes following his movements which caused his nerves to spike slightly.

"Okay, are you ready?" Eddie asked gently.

"No but go ahead hun, I'll just be here trying not to pass out" Richie laughed.

"Well we should probably do this then." Eddie mumbled as he shed the blue gloves and prodded a finger at the control panel of Richie's chair, rising and reclining it in the same movement.

“Oh good, now I won't fall and crack my head open on the tile” Richie laughed.

“Yeah that's the idea” Eddie smiled and readjusted the table to comfortably hold Richie's arm. “Okay let's get this over with... just focus on breathing, and don't watch because you'll definitely pass out.”

“Okay doc” Richie fluttered his eyes closed as he adjusted himself in his seat, resting his good hand across his stomach.

“I'm a nurse technically but whatever” Eddie clamped the needle in the forceps.

Eddie tried to focus solely on stitching Richie's hand as quickly and neatly as possible, but his eyes instead wandered to the line of skin that peaked under Richie's shirt due to his fist gripping the fabric of his shirt for dear life. Eddie made sure to not look at his face as he got back to work.

“Fucking hell this is the worst thing ever.” Richie groaned.

“It's almost over, you're doing great” Eddie comforted.

Richie released his grip on his shirt to instead return his large hand to his face, covering almost the entirety of it. Eddie watched him clench his jaw again as he tied a knot on one of the stitches. Richie's ears went red and a few tears trailed down his neck to pool somewhere along his collarbone.

“Okay I just have a few more to go” Eddie worked as swiftly as he could, eager to relieve Richie from the pain he was putting him through.

Once Eddie was finished, he poured more hydrogen peroxide over the wound for good measure before wrapping it with some gauze from a roll and taping it, he then gently wrapped his hand with some kaban to further secure the gauze. Eddie made a show of taking his gloves off as loudly as he could because Richie hadn't taken his hand away from his face yet.

“Hey Richie, are you okay?” Eddie lightly tapped at his forearm.

“Oh my god, that hurt so fucking bad” Richie’s voice was almost a whisper.

“I know, I’m sorry, but you took it like a champ” Eddie playfully jabbed Richie’s shoulder with a finger to try and lighten the mood.

“I am not fucking going to work tomorrow I don’t care what they say.” Richie’s voice was almost back to normal as he dragged his hand down his face to rest on his chest.

“I don’t blame ya” Eddie laughed before continuing “so make sure you change the gauze everyday, let the air at it for a few hours every day as well, but not tomorrow we don’t want it getting infected, and keep it *clean*, if that gets infected you could lose an arm.” Eddie got to work cleaning off the metal desk as Richie slowly sat up in the chair.

Eddie watched each of Richie’s movements like a hawk, a part of him was worried about Richie collapsing to the ground, but a larger part was purely interested in visually exploring each part of Richie. He watched as he pulled his phone out of his pocket to check it.

“Sounds good doc...” his eyes wandered the screen of his phone “damn, my boss just told me not to come tomorrow, they’re gonna fire fuckin Steve.” Richie chuckled weakly.

“How does your boss know already? Also, who is *fuckin* Steve?” Eddie sprayed down the table with a disinfectant.

“Oh, we all went out to talk about skit ideas and we were all shitting on *fuckin* Steve because he didn’t think that the bottles they use to smash each other’s heads on TV and shit were fake. That’s how this happened.” Richie gestured the hand in his lap.

“Oh, do you work for a theater or something?”

“No, Saturday Night Live.”

“Oh, shit so you’re like a whole actor and stuff?”

“Yeah I guess...” Richie laughed at Eddie’s phrasing “hey, is your offer still on the table? I was about to text Bowie that I found him a

live-in nurse but then I realized we left the convo kinda ambiguous.” Richie was quick to change the subject.

“Yes, I can come over to help change your cat’s bandages tomorrow night.” Eddie phrased the entire plan as to squash the possible live-in nurse situation that Richie joked about.

“Thank you so much, seriously.” Richie did something on his phone then held it out to Eddie “We should probably exchange numbers so I can bug you all day tomorrow before you come over, but also so that I can send you my address and stuff.”

“Awesome, then I’ll post it online so all of the thirsty girls watching SNL can pound at your door.” Eddie joked as he typed his number into Richie’s phone and texted himself.

“Aww Eds you think I’m cute enough for girls to be thirsty over me?” Richie chuckled as Eddie handed him back his phone.

“What? Shut up, no I don’t.” Eddie huffed and turned to act like he *had* to lower the height of the metal table in order to distract Richie from the blush that was forming on his face.

Eddie felt his phone buzz in his breast pocket alerting him of the text that he sent himself from Richie’s phone, then it buzzed a few more times, he looked at Richie to see that his thumb was dancing across the keyboard with a smirk on his face.

“What the hell are you sending me?”

All Richie did was laugh, avoiding answering Eddie’s question.

“Alright well I better get outa here.” Richie stood and pushed his phone back into his pocket then grabbed his purple hoodie.

“You know, club soda can wash the blood out.”

“That’s creepy that you know that...how many people have you murdered?” Richie giggled and tilted his head.

“What!? No, I work here dummy!” Eddie laughed.

Richie laughed too, Eddie stood and walked over to pull the curtains back into their position bunched against the wall.

“Okay Eds, I’ll see you tomorrow” Richie waved at him with his bandaged hand and walked towards the exit.

Eddie glanced at his watch and saw that it was 10:20, he headed towards the locker room to get ready to go home.

He sat on the bench in the middle of the room for a minute to check his phone.

Unknown Number

[10:08] : Richie’s phone

[10:09] : I saved your name as Nurse Eddie

[10:10] : nvm its Nurse Eds

[10:11] : nvm now its Eddie Spaghetti

[10:11] : I’ll make us spaghetti for dinner

[10:11] : That means don’t eat anything

Eddie found himself smiling at how dumb the texts were.

Notes for the Chapter:

TW: Graphic description of minor medical procedure and heavy mentions of blood.

Sorry for the short-ish chapter, I promise the next one is a literal beef-cake, it's around 7,000 words and I'm not even finished. The next chapter is by far my favorite so far.

Also I am well aware that this is not at all how Emergency clinics run, I am not a nursing major...

4. Eddie Spaghetti

Notes for the Chapter:

TW: See end notes!

Richie [3:34] : Bowie is really excited for you to come over

Richie [3:34] : He wants to play video games but I told him that you're strictly business

Richie [3:35] : I don't care what time you come btw just let me know when you're on the way so I can hide my drugs

Eddie read the texts as he sat in front of the desktop at work, silently hoping to himself that Richie's comment about the drugs wasn't serious.

Eddie Spaghetti [4:03] : I am supposed to get out of here at 6

Eddie Spaghetti [4:03] : I have to stop home to let my dog out after work then I'll come over after

Richie [4:04] : YOU DIDN'T SAY YOU HAD A DOOOOOG!

Eddie Spaghetti [4:04] : It didn't come up in conversation!!! I was literally sewing your body closed!

Richie [4:04] : You have to tell me all about your dog later

Eddie clicked his phone off and returned his attention to the paperwork in front of him. Luckily, they were pretty well staffed tonight and there weren't too many patients in, so Eddie could catch up on some stuff left over from yesterday.

The next two hours felt as if they would never pass, when they finally did it almost caught Eddie off guard. He managed to leave on time and just about ran home, he loved coming home to Winnow, she was the light of his life, a ball of pure happiness and joy.

He burst through the door of his apartment to surprise her, she

leaped over the back of the couch and barreled towards him. She whined loudly, overcome with joy at the sight of her favorite person in the entire world. Her tail swished back and forth, swaying her entire behind along with it. She picked up one of her many toys that littered the ground on her way towards Eddie to present him with a gift for his arrival. When she finally wiggled all the way to him, he almost fell over at the force of her front paws pushing against his stomach, he leaned against the closed door to brace his body. Laughing as he ruffled her soft ears before leaning down to pull her into an awkward hug.

There was a point in their lives where he was desperately trying to train her out of this habit of trying to tackle him to the ground with love every time he came home, but decided against it because of how special it made him feel.

Winnow dropped the toy she held in her mouth to lick Eddie's face.

"Oh my goodness thank you so much" Eddie chuckled as he ran his face through the crook of his elbow to rid it of as much of the slobber as he could.

"Wanna go outside!?" Eddie asked her enthusiastically.

She responded by running back to the couch and leaping over the back of it, doing a lap around the living room and jumping back over the couch to meet him at the door again then spun in circles, all the while whining and panting.

"Winnow! Sit." Eddie managed to reel her energy back in as she gladly planted her ass on the ground with purpose.

Eddie grabbed her pink leash and draped his buckled fanny pack across his chest. Once Winnow's collar was clipped, they were out the door and jogging down the stairs.

He walked her around the courtyard until she performed both acts, he discarded the small black bag then glanced around to make sure all of the exits to the yard were sealed and no one else was there before dropping her leash. As he did so Winnow fell into a play bow, she had an understanding as to what dropping the leash meant when

they were in the yard. Eddie chuckled then chose a direction and ran for it, Winnow chased him, close at his heels all the while yipping loudly.

Eddie frequently stopped abruptly to change direction, catching Winnow off guard causing her to miss her target, having to fumble and scrape at the ground to right herself and chase him again. Occasionally, Eddie would let her “catch” him by her lightly mouthing his leg or arm, then it would be her turn to run and his turn to chase. It was a fun game that they could play together, Eddie used to bring her to a dog park frequently and once had a great conversation with a dog behavior specialist who pointed out each of the ways that the dogs were playing in the yard. The kind of play Winnow greatly preferred was what many people refer to as “Push-Pull” where she and another dog would basically take turns chasing each other.

Eddie felt bad when they moved to the new apartment because the dog park was no longer within a reasonable walking distance, he made up for it by playing her favorite game with her instead. Though he wasn’t a dog she seemed to enjoy it none the less.

Once they were both out of breath, they made the walk back up to their apartment. Winnow got to work on her dinner that dispensed itself from the automatic feeder while they were outside, and Eddie stripped himself of his work clothes. He pulled on a pair of tight jeans and a tee-shirt, French tucking it into his pants as he glanced at himself in the mirror. He ran a few hands through his hair, it managed to fall from its styled look throughout the day and especially because of his play session with Winnow in the yard. He reflected on the times where his mother would scold him for leaving the house with his hair left in its natural wavy state, she taught him how to style his hair “correctly” at a young age, Eddie has been doing it out of habit ever since. However, he decided that styling his hair wasn’t worth his time right now, it wasn’t that his hair looked *bad* it just didn’t look how it was *supposed* to.

Eddie slipped on his sneakers and kissed the top of Winnow’s head before saying goodbye and locking the apartment behind him. He typed Richie’s address into his phone, of which was sent to him at 8 am that morning. After he got an idea as to the general direction, he

sent a text to Richie.

Eddie [6:36] : I'm on my way I should be there in like 20 minutes

Richie [6:36] : okay, I hope you didn't eat because I'm making dinner

Richie knew he was fucked when he felt his heart skip a beat at the appearance of Eddie's name on his phone. He was super *fucking* embarrassed...his drunken mouth spilled just about every thought that crossed his mind last night at the ER. If it would have been up to his sober mind, he would have realized that Bev probably would have helped him with Bowie and just shut up about the whole thing to Eddie. Hell, even *Stan* might have helped him with some convincing.

He cursed his mouth because he couldn't fall for someone else, at least not right now. Richie felt he had to do some serious reflecting on his actions and behavior before considering another relationship, friendship or not, Eddie was fucking *adorable*... Richie couldn't fathom how the fuck his drunken mind managed to convince Eddie to take time out of his obviously busy life to come over and help him with Bowie.

Richie was sitting fully clothed in his empty bathtub with Bowie staring at him, perched on the toilet lid.

"What the hell are you looking at sir..." Richie reached his good hand to scratch at Bowie's forehead and was met with a soft paw beating him.

"Bowie what the fuck am I doing man, I swear if I fall in love with this asshole, I am blaming you." Richie closed his eyes.

He thought about when he first met Bev, the only relationship that didn't end in a flaming pile of shit. When they met, they interpreted their dynamic wrong, obviously charged by each other's good looks, they thought that they were destined to hook up and possibly start a

relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend. As they got to talking more, they realized that they were supposed to simply be friends. Somehow the whole ordeal of *having sex* and then telling each other that they *no longer wanted to have sex* didn't bring them apart, but closer together. Ever since they have been connected at the hip, talking or texting every day and knowing far too much about each other's lives.

Richie was thankful that their relationship didn't inch too close to intimate because he firmly believed that it would have ended just like the others. He didn't know what the difference between Bev and the others was but all he understood was that at some point she would eventually find something about him that pushed her over the edge enough to rid him of her life forever. If they would have dated it would have been sooner rather than later. Sometimes, when Richie was having a shitty mental health day, he felt that she would tell him at any second how much his tendency to joke about her relationship with Ben pissed her off and send him off with a sour look and a block on her phone.

He couldn't tell if he was ready to take on another *waiting game* with Eddie, but a part of him felt that it might be worth it.

Eddie lightly knocked at the wood of Richie's apartment door. He rocked back and forth on his feet and shoved his hands into the pockets of his windbreaker, waiting for Richie to open the door. He heard a thump on the door and he quickly determined that that was Richie's forehead clunking against the wood as he peered through the peephole.

The door swung open and Eddie's eyes trailed over Richie's form in a once over, Richie's face was just as pretty as it was last night, his hair was slightly greasy but still wild as ever, he was wearing thin grey sweatpants and a loose fitting tee-shirt with a band name scrawled across the front that Eddie wasn't familiar with.

"Damn you tucked your shirt in and everything, I should have put

some makeup on at least” Richie chuckled and stepped to the side to allow Eddie to enter.

“Haha, fuck you man I like being presentable” Eddie said sarcastically as he kicked his shoes off and neatly placed them next to the pile of various sneakers and boots on the ground by the door. Then he slid his jacket off and hung it on a hook above said shoes.

“Damn, what’s that like?” Richie laughed as he shut the door and walked into his kitchen, Eddie trailed close behind, distracted at how tall he was.

“So I am gonna wrap him in a towel and hold him tight” Richie opened one of the overhead kitchen cabinets and fished around as he spoke “if you could do the handy work back there while I keep the monster contained, we could probably walk out of here with all of our limbs.” Richie turned around holding various medical supplies with a bright smile plastering his face.

“Sounds good to me” Eddie had no choice but to smile back.

“Alright, let me show you my pussy now.” Richie giggled and lead the way to his master bedroom.

Eddie was taken slightly aback by the state of things, his bed was a complete disaster of countless pillows and mismatched blankets, Eddie couldn’t piece together in his mind how one would even go about trying to make up the bed and figured Richie never did anyway. His closet doors and a few drawers of his dresser were opened, and a few clothes were spilling out. The bookshelf in his room wasn’t riddled with books at all, but it had what appeared to be countless movies filling three of the five shelves, this confused Eddie because there wasn’t even a TV in this damn room...

Eddie’s attention was drawn away from visually exploring Richie’s room by the opening of a door. Richie was slowly opening the door to his master bathroom and Eddie followed closely behind him.

“Hi bud! Here’s that hot nurse I was telling you about.” Richie said to Bowie who was stretching in a fluffy bed on the tile floor. Richie held the door open for Eddie to enter and shut it promptly after Eddie was

well into the room.

Eddie watched as Richie dropped the supplies into the sink and lightly flex his injured hand, obviously irritated at the mere act of cradling a few things in his arm. Eddie couldn't help but notice that the wrappings were the same ones that he fastened last night.

"So I guess were changing yours tonight too huh?" Eddie teased with his hands on his hips referencing Richie's hand.

"Hey man I was gonna get to it eventually" Richie rolled his eyes and sat cross-legged on the ground. Eddie followed suit by sitting on the edge of the tub.

Bowie emerged from his spot on the bed and sauntered over to Richie's lap, Eddie smirked as Richie ran a hand along Bowie's back. Bowie placed his two front paws on Richie's thigh and stretched before crawling over them and into the well his crossed legs made. Eddie felt his heart pang as he noticed how Bowie's movements were careful as to not cause discomfort to his legs, the way he slowly and gently stepped each leg into the comfort of Richie's lap in such a way as to not bring contact to his wounds.

"How sweet is that" Eddie smiled.

"Yeah he's an angel when he wants to be, but he could take your fuckin' arm off" Richie laughed.

"Well now I'm nervous" Eddie joked.

"Come here and make friends with him before he hates you forever." Richie motioned for Eddie to join him on the ground.

He slid onto the floor and scooted across the tile floor to lean against the cabinets next to Richie and reached his hand out slowly, holding it in front of Bowie's face for a minute before reaching into the cone to scratch the top of his head. His heart picked up on the close proximity to Richie and beat a little harder.

Bowie leaned into the touch and purred a little louder which made Eddie smile.

“Apparently when he first got to the shelter, he wouldn’t let anyone near him. They got him from some asshole guy, and they think he might have abused him. I mean he’s only 1 or 2 years old, so he probably spent his whole life with this guy being an ass to him.” Richie frowned as he spoke “I mean I couldn’t *not* take him home...”

They sat in silence for a minute, occasionally petting Bowie who was still walking all around Richie’s lap. Eddie couldn’t stop his heart from melting in that moment, not only did he consider Richie to be beautiful on the outside, but he was starting to share just how beautiful he was on the inside as well.

“That’s really kind of you Richie” when Eddie’s eyes found Richie’s they were already looking at him. Eddie felt himself blush when Richie made no effort to break the deafening silence in the room. Richie’s face visibly softened in those few silent seconds.

“I-I mean ‘s no big deal I guess... he needed a home and I needed a friend, so I guess perfect match...” Richie broke the silence finally, tearing their connected gaze apart and scratching at the back of his neck. Eddie noticed a blush creep across his prominent cheekbones as he ducked his head.

Bowie, who finally settled comfortably into Richie’s lap watched Richie’s bracelets jingle as he scratched his neck, he stood as quickly as he could, considering his injuries, and batted at the metal charms strung about the black cord.

“Oh boy he’s getting rowdy” Richie giggled “we better get to work huh.”

“Yeah let’s get those legs taken care of.” Eddie slowly got to his feet stretching as he did so, releasing some tension.

Richie motioned for Bowie to hop off of his lap before also standing up.

“Okay so I’m sure I don’t have to explain it to you too much, you are a professional after all” Richie chuckled “the Vet said to make sure they’re not too tight or too loose...Goldilocks and what not. Also, this has to go on with a q-tip before we wrap him up.” Richie held the

tube of antibiotic cream.

“Okay, sounds easy enough” Eddie turned to wash his hands at the sink.

Richie cracked his neck and hopped on the balls of his feet a few times. “Okay here goes nothin’.”

Richie crouched and gently wrapped Bowie’s front half in a towel, then tucked the same half into the space between his right bicep and his rib-cage, jutting Bowie’s back legs towards Eddie by supporting his abdomen with his right hand.

Eddie worked as fast as he could, cringing at the visual of the wounds when he peeled the bandages away. Frowning and making brief eye contact with Richie before getting to work squeezing the cream onto two separate cotton swabs.

“Right?” Richie acknowledged the moment.

Eddie smirked at him as he gently coated each wound with the ointment, Bowie squirmed and meowed as he did this, obviously uncomfortable with the cold ointment disturbing such a sensitive spot.

“Well at least we know he doesn’t have nerve damage” Eddie said.

Richie chuckled and adjusted his grip on the cat as Eddie reached for the spool of gauze and the scissors.

“Oh shit we forgot to cut the strips!”

“No-no it’s easier this way anyway...” Eddie spun the spool around Bowie’s left leg first, “more sanitary too.”

“Damn you really know your stuff Doc.” Richie smirked.

“Still not a Doctor...” Eddie said as he cut through the gauze and pieced a short strip of medical tape to hold it in place. He then quickly got to work spinning the spool around Bowie’s other leg.

Once they were done Richie set Bowie down in his cat bed, gently

pulling the towel away as he did so.

“You did so good bud!” Richie scratched behind one of Bowie’s ears who looked *extremely* pissed off.

“He looks like he wants to murder you” Eddie laughed.

“Yeah, murder me with *love*” Richie laughed as he stood up. “let’s give him a minute alone to decide that he doesn’t hate us.”

“Okay” He followed Richie out into the kitchen.

“Did you eat? Because I told you not to and I was serious...” Richie teased as he opened various cabinets, pulling out a variety of kitchen ware.

“No, I didn’t eat” Eddie smiled as he crossed his arms and leaned into the kitchen island, next to one of the chairs. He didn’t realize how hungry he was until dinner appeared to be happening right before his very eyes.

Richie pulled a box of spaghetti noodles out of one of the cabinets and set it on the island, next to the electric stove top, he then walked to a different cabinet and pulled out a sealed mason jar of what appeared to be homemade marinara sauce, evident by the only label on it being a date on the metal lid, he set it next to the box of noodles and grabbed the larger of the two pots on the other side of the stove.

“Sit down, stay a while!” Richie smiled and motioned towards the dark wooden bar stool Eddie was standing next to before carrying the pot to the sink and filling it with water. Eddie ignored his request and instead walked around the counter top to stop Richie from carrying the heavy ass pot of water to the stove with his injured hand, simply picking it up out of the sink when it was full enough and setting it on the stove.

“You really shouldn’t lift heavy shit with those stitches, you’ll rip the whole cut apart.” Eddie explained as he sat down at the bar stool finally.

“You got a point there Eds” Richie smiled and nodded his head “while were on the subject how the fuck do I shower with this like is

it okay?”

“You could put on a glove if you want but if you don’t want to do that just don’t get too much soap and stuff in it.” Eddie explained.

“Okay, might need your help with that later” Richie winked at him, a furious blush flooded his cheeks in response.

Attempting to change the subject, Eddie reached for the jar, further examining it...his mind filled with questions.

“Did you make this or something?” Eddie held the jar up for Richie to glance at him.

“Yeah I did with my mom, she’s like a super fucking good cook.” Richie clicked on the stove. “We cook together a lot, she used to say she was training me to run my own restaurant.” Richie smiled at the memories.

“That sounds like fun...” Eddie smiled, he thought about how nice it would have been to grow up with a normal mom who let him do simple things like cook, fascinated by the idea of someone *encouraging* him to do something like that.

Richie pushed the smaller saucepan onto the stove top and reached for the jar of marinara sauce, Eddie watched him pick it up and go to twist off the sealed top with his injured hand.

“AH-” was what sprung out of Eddie’s mouth as his hand shot forward and grabbed Richie’s wrist before he could completely fuck up his hand by opening the jar.

“Damn I should keep you around huh, I could avoid many more disasters” Richie chuckled as he held the jar out to Eddie who opened it easily and risk free.

Richie poured the contents of the jar into the saucepan and adjusted the dial on the stove to slowly heat the sauce at a low heat. He dropped the jar in the sink before opening another cabinet.

“Hey do you drink?” Richie craned his neck around to look at Eddie, waiting for a response.

"I mean not regularly, just like a glass of wine sometimes." Eddie responded honestly.

"Pinot Grigio sound good? It goes really well with the pasta." Richie held the bottle of white wine out of the cabinet to show Eddie, as if he's supposed to see the bottle in order to decide.

"I mean yeah sure, you know better than me" Eddie didn't know the first thing about wine other than that he preferred sweeter tastes, like Moscato.

Before Richie could respond his phone chimed repeatedly from its spot in his front pocket. Richie set the bottle on the counter and pulled his phone out of his pocket to glance at the screen and answer before putting it to his ear.

"What's up?" Eddie heard the voice of a woman on the other end of the line though he couldn't make out exactly what she was saying.

"No, you don't have to come over, I'm fine Bev I swear..." Richie trailed off as he positioned the phone to prop against his ear with his shoulder to fish through a drawer to find the wine opener.

"...because I have someone over" Richie tried to open the bottle himself, but the task was one that greatly required two hands, Eddie stood and walked around the counter to open it for him. Richie thanked him with a smile before rolling his eyes at the phone conversation.

"No-no it's not like that, he came over to help with Bowie, just guys being dudes..." Richie's face turned red, he walked behind Eddie to open another cabinet to fish out two wine glasses.

"You don't know him."

"No, he doesn't work with us." Richie set the glasses down on the counter, Eddie poured them as Richie stirred the sauce and added salt to the pasta water.

"Don't get your panties in a twist, I'll tell ya later jeez..."

Eddie smirked at his use of the word 'jeez'.

“Okay....okay...Love you too, bye.” Richie huffed and returned his phone to his pocket.

Eddie felt his stomach sink. “Was that your girlfriend?” Eddie questioned as he carried his wine glass back over to his seat at the counter.

“NO-No... she’s just Bev... I’m uh...she’s just a good friend, BEST friend...” Richie’s words stumbled out of his mouth and his cheeks went pink as he poured the dry pasta noodles into the boiling water. “Why Eds, are you jealous?”

“What!? No! I just... was wondering, I don’t know!” It was Eddie’s turn to go red in the face and stumble over his words. “And don’t call me Eds!”

Richie laughed “Tell me about your dog *Edward*...” a goofy smile grew across his face as he drew Eddie’s full name out of his mouth with slow emphasis.

A shudder flooded Eddie’s body at the name “Ugh please don’t call me that either, that’s worse...”

“Fine, tell me about your dog Eds.” Richie grinned as he stirred the pots.

Eddie decided to ignore the use of the nickname “Well... her name is Winnow, short for Winona, she’s a beautiful red golden retriever...” Eddie couldn’t help but smile thinking about his best friend “she is my best friend in the whole world and her favorite things to do are tackle me with kisses and run around our courtyard.”

“I love her already” Richie sighed and cocked his head to the side.

Eddie clicked his phone on to show Richie his lock screen, which was a photo of Winnow running towards him in their courtyard, she looked absolutely beautiful with her long red hair billowing in the wind and her face held in an adorable puppy smile with her tongue hung at the side of her mouth.

Richie beamed at the photo “Wow she’s adorable! I want to meet her!”

"She'd probably love you" Eddie smirked and took a sip of wine as he pocked his phone.

"Why's that?"

"I don't know you guys just have like..." Eddie's hand wagged in the air as he searched for the words to match what he was thinking "the same energy... you remind me of her kind of."

"Oh yeah? Well you remind me of my cat" Richie giggled.

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

All Richie did was smile, raising his eyebrows as he jabbed a finger through the air in Eddie's direction, as if to say *that's why*.

Eddie responded in a face of annoyance and crossed his legs as he took another sip of wine.

Richie giggled as he placed the colander in the empty sink, then he started to pull on oven mitts and Eddie's eyes frantically darted from Richie's fucked hand to the heavy pot he was about to pick up.

"Okay, no... don't do that." Eddie said as he stood and walked around the corner, swiftly taking the oven mitts from him and slipping them on his own hands. Eddie was starting to think Richie kept doing this shit on purpose.

Eddie drained the noodles and returned them to the pot on the stove that was now flicked off. As he set the pot down Richie ladled some of the sauce into the noodles and stirred them.

"Just think about the state your hand would have been in if I wasn't here..." Eddie smiled and leaned against the counter sipping his wine.

Richie took a swig of his own "I can't help it, I'm impulsive." Richie winked as if it was supposed to mean something.

Eddie scoffed and sat back down at the island as Richie pulled out two wide, shallow bowls and two large forks, he plated the food and pushed one of the bowls over to Eddie.

“Bon appetit Eddie Spaghetti.” Richie grinned *hard* suppressing a laugh and leaning over the counter in a sort of bow. Eddie blushed in return, embarrassed by the nickname and the now awareness of the intention of the meal.

“Wow...I can’t believe how dumb you are...” Eddie smirked and tilted his head to the side with a look of sarcastic amazement on his face.

“I just keep getting better and better huh” Richie chuckled and carried his glass around the island and set it in front of the middle chair of three then wandered off into the connected living room, messing with his phone as he walked to the TV. Eddie watched as he crouched to mess with what appeared to be a stereo system adjusting the volume and pressing a few buttons before a stream of music flowed through the large speakers on either side of the TV. Eddie wasn’t sure of the artist, but the music was soft and raw.

“Music helps digestion, you’re a nurse you should know this” Richie shot a confused look at Eddie responding to the look Eddie held on his own face. He shimmied his shoulders along to the slow beat of the music as he glided into his seat.

Eddie smirked and shook his head before drawing his attention towards his meal, on the surface, *visual* level it was simple spaghetti. A dish familiar from countless nights growing up eating meals that were quick, easy and filling. A *go to* dish when you were nervous to try the food at a new restaurant, a comforting dish that said nothing more than ‘I am going to be pretty tasty as you eat me and I will leave you feeling satisfied and full, nothing more nothing less.’

Then, Eddie took his first bite. His mind immediately sprung to life with flavor, he couldn’t pin the flavor he was experiencing though... it was sweet but not a kind of *sugary* sweet, like a *natural* sweet... and that sweetness complimented the oh so *savory*. Eddie couldn’t help but shut his eyes and dip his head forward a little, taken aback by the pure heavenly flavor in his mouth.

“Richie this is so fucking good!” Eddie’s eyes widened in emphasis as he looked to Richie, who was eating the dish as if he’s eaten in a thousand times, which he probably has.

Richie laughed “Thanks dude, I’ll tell my mom she got a compliment.”

“And you’re right, this wine does go with the pasta. Like I don’t know how it does, but it just *does*...” Eddie sipped more from his glass.

“Damn I should feed you more often” Richie laughed, amused by Eddie’s sudden change in behavior.

“Yes, you should...” Eddie said before twirling his fork to prepare another bite of the haven infused pasta sauce.

“Just you wait till this hand is all healed up, I’ll have you eating all kinds of shit, homemade pizza, fuckin’ lasagna, any thing you want I guess...” Richie smiled then went back to eating which caused Eddie to do the same.

They finished their meal quietly, enjoying the food, wine, and music all of which complimenting each other in some way. Eddie thought to himself how amazed he was of how in tune Richie was with his senses. Understanding the perfect wine and music to compliment his family marina recipe was nothing short of amazing to Eddie. The meal was entirely enjoyable and left him feeling a new kind of satisfied and happy, he felt calmed by the wine and music, he felt full and comforted by the dish.

“That was like the best meal I’ve ever had I think” Eddie said before finishing off the last of his glass of wine.

“Damn Eds you gotta get out more.” Richie giggled as he stood to take his and Eddie’s dishes to the sink.

“I get out enough...” Was all Eddie could think to say, trying to remember the last time he really *went out* which he couldn’t recall...

“Hey what’s this stuff called” Richie asked as he turned to face Eddie, pointing at the flesh colored material wrapping his hand protecting the gauze beneath from the elements.

“Koban” Eddie replied.

“Okay I’ll be right back” Richie walked towards the door and slipped

on a pair of shoes.

“Huh?” Eddie was entirely taken aback by the abrupt decision.

“I gotta go to the store to get *koban* really quick, it’s just down the block I’ll be back in like twenty minutes, tops” Richie shrugged on a thin leather coat that framed his shoulders oh so well “you want anything?”

“Okay” Eddie was still confused but he decided to just roll with it “uh, no thanks...”

“Alright, be back in a jiff, make sure Bowie doesn’t burn the place down.” Richie winked as he glided through the door.

Eddie was left alone in the warmly lit apartment, essence of Richie all around. The soft music still poured through the speakers which Eddie stood and wandered towards. He took the moment to absorb the visual of the entire apartment, which was hard to focus on when Richie was there distracting from the view with his perfect curly hair, fair but freckled skin and gloriously blue eyes.

The couch was massive and *fluffy*, the cushions resembling grey clouds, there was a shaggy darker grey rug underneath to compliment. The white walls of the living room carried light through the room comfortably, easily reflecting the colors of the setting sun and city through the large black paned window. The kitchen was stunning to say the least... the center island framed the cook-top which allowed room for the surrounding counter tops to support a double oven, French door fridge, and farm house sink, with plenty of cabinet space.

The apartment complimented Richie well, where there was color, it was *loud*, a large fluffy mustard yellow pillow was cornered on the arm of the couch with a matching forest green one on the other side. There were also a few pictures framed on the wall, one of which was in a thick hot pink frame, the photo was of Richie with three people, all of which appearing to be close in age to him, one stood close in height to him and sported a head of curls similar to Richie’s but tighter and lighter in color, there was a woman with short light red hair who had her arm draped around Richie’s waist, her head leaning

against another man's shoulder with her other arm holding him close, he was the tallest in the photo but not by much with Richie there, he had short light brown hair and kind eyes sweetly complimenting his muscular build.

The other photos on the wall were colorful, one of which was a large print of who Eddie recognized as David Bowie, the picture had just about every color in it, it easily tied the apartment together through it's exaggerated use of color. Eddie wandered back into the kitchen, trailing his eyes along the mess of pots littering the stove top.

Eddie thought about how fucked Richie's hand would be if he decided to do the dishes, doubting his senses to at least put a rubber glove over his stitched hand before submerging it into water littered with food particles and germs. Eddie quickly got to work, stacking the pots on the stove and carrying them to the sink containing their used dishes and ran water into them to work on soaking off any stuck on particles of food as he bent to open the dish washer, there were a few dirty glasses and utensils in there already. Eddie rinsed and added everything to the dishwasher but the pots, a thought reminded him of countless infomercials and nights watching the food network that advised not to put kitchen ware like this in the dishwasher. He scrubbed them clean with dish soap and a sponge and set them on the drying rack. When he was done, he patted his hands dry on a towel and closed the dishwasher.

He decided to check on Bowie in the bathroom, lightly tapping the door before opening it slowly, he didn't want to scare him by bursting in.

"Hi Bowie, how are you doin' little guy..." Eddie gently closed the door behind him as he sat on the ground in front of Bowie who was currently curled in his cat bed.

"Sorry about earlier, we we're just trying to help..." Eddie held a hand out to Bowie who up until that moment was staring at him with a look flooded with uncertainty. Eddie smirked as Bowie leaned his forehead into Eddie's hand.

Eddie snaked his fingers into the crack between the hard plastic of the e-collar and Bowie's neck, scratching at the spot at the back of his

neck which caused Bowie to purr. His eyes wandered around the bathroom. Stopping at the interior of the bath next to where he was crouched on the ground. *How fucking chaotic* is what Eddie thought to himself when his eyes locked on a laptop on the floor of the bath underneath the tap and a pillow leaned against the back of the tub. Eddie stood and pulled the sticker littered laptop out of the tub and set it on the large counter top instead. Before glancing back to Bowie who was now shifted in his bed, obviously trying to go back to sleep.

Eddie scooped up the various medical supplies before flicking off the lights and leaving the room. Just as he entered the kitchen the large dark wooden door burst open, Richie walked in and kicked the door closed behind him, his injured hand was pocketed in his jacket and the other held a few plastic shopping bags.

“See I told you I’d be quick” Richie kicked his shoes back into the pile next to the door and put the bags on the counter before shedding himself of his jacket and hanging it on the hook above his shoe pile. “and now we have koban!”

“And whatever else all of this is...” Eddie chuckled; a bit confused as he placed the supplies he was holding onto the counter next to the bags.

“Oh yeah I got Winnow a present, I just couldn’t help it.” Richie fished in one of the bags and pulled out an expensive looking stuffed dog toy in the shape of a turtle handing it over to Eddie. “I thought it was really cute.”

“I’m sure she’d love it... but you really didn’t have to get her anything” Eddie squeaked the toy a few times. “thank you though.”

“And I got some stuff for Bowie” Richie pulled a dark blue cat bed out of one of the bags and started tossing various cat toys inside of it “their pet section was pretty dope.”

Richie crumpled the bags up together and shoved them into one of the kitchen cabinets.

“Hey, you didn’t have to do the dishes!” Richie turned to face Eddie with his good hand propped against his hip.

“Well I kind of did” Eddie chuckled and referenced Richie’s injured hand with a nod.

“Psshhhh Bowie could have done em...he needs to start pulling his weight around here anyway” Richie chuckled.

“Hey, lets change your bandages before we forget...” Eddie walked to the sink to wash his hands.

“Oh god I’m nervous...” Richie sighed and added the koban to the pile of medical supplies as he sat in one of the stools.

“Why?” Eddie dried his hands on a paper towel and tossed it in the trash.

“Cus what if it’s like super gnarly looking and I fucking throw up or something” Richie spoke as if Eddie was weird to be questioning his nerves.

“You’ll get used to it, and it won’t be as bad as you think I promise” Eddie sat in the seat across from Richie, facing him as he held out his hands.

Richie lightly held his left hand out to Eddie, palm up. Eddie gently cupped his hand and started to peel away the layers of koban, revealing the blood soiled gauze.

Eddie reached for the scissors in the pile of medical supplies and cut a strip through the gauze on the portion that shielded the top of Richie’s hand.

“Are you ready?”

“No but go ahead” Richie shrugged.

Eddie lightly peeled away the gauze to reveal Richie’s stitches. They looked good by the medical standard, nothing was infected, and the stitches seemed to be holding up well, effectively doing their job.

“It looks good to me” Eddie said happily, then he tilted his head back up to catch Richie staring blankly at his hand with wide eyes and a pale expression.

“Holy shit I look like fuckin’ Frankenstein” Richie’s voice sounded like a whisper.

“Frankenstein’s monster Rich...” Eddie tried to distract Richie’s mind “and don’t look at it if you’re gonna pass out” Eddie shielded Richie’s palm from his view.

“Oh man call me Rich all the time” Richie said quickly and quietly, his voice still coming out in a whisper.

Eddie wasn’t sure of how to respond to that so he just got to work instead, he decided that he didn’t want to disturb the scabbing by pouring hydrogen peroxide over it and decided to skip to simply wrapping it back up with some gauze and koban. When he was finished, he tilted his head up to see that Richie’s eyes were on him, assumedly the whole time.

“You’re all fixed up...” Eddie broke the thick silence that flood the room.

“Let’s watch something!” Was how Richie replied.

“Okay but not too long I have to get home to Winnow.” Eddie didn’t really want to leave but he missed his dog.

“Okay yeah I understand” Richie got up, slowly and crumpled the soiled gauze in his good hand, tossing them in the trash on his way to the living room.

Eddie trailed close behind Richie, eagerly sitting on the couch close on the side of the green pillow, he felt like the couch was fucking *hugging* him. Richie crouched in front of the tv, opening one of the cabinets beneath it. Eddie then understood why his bedroom bookshelf had a movies, the cabinet was *full*, every crack stuffed with another DVD.

“How about Futurama?”

“Sure!” frankly, Eddie had never seen Futurama, but was eager to experience more of Richie’s interests.

Richie popped open one of the DVDs from his box set into the PS4

and pressed a few buttons on the sound system, silencing the music. Then snagged one of the controllers and remote before flopping onto the other side of the couch.

As the show started, Richie quite literally *snuggled* into the couch, he pulled his feet up and leaned onto the arm of the couch while hugging the yellow pillow close to his chest.

He's like a child Eddie thought in a sort of amazement, the cartoon was pretty funny and obviously had an influence on Richie's sense of humor growing up, Richie giggled throughout the episode, giggling especially when the character Bender had a line. Eddie hadn't realized it until now, but he had morphed into his own idea of *curled up* on the couch. His torso was pretty much facing Richie and he had his feet propped up in front of him, his back leaned comfortably against the green pillow and he snugly leaned into the back rest of the couch with his head turned to see the TV but also positioned to easily avert his eyes to watch Richie's shoulders bob as he laughed at the show.

Once the episode was over, Eddie spoke as the credits rolled.

"So I should probably come over again tomorrow to help with Bowie again right? Unless you've got someone else to give you a hand..." Eddie trailed off and scratched at a spot on the denim covering his knee.

"Oh yeah, no I haven't asked anyone...would you mind? I mean I get it you have a life and stuff...it's totally fine if you don't want to..." Richie rambled as he sat up.

"No yeah I'd be happy to come over again and help..." Eddie thought before finishing what he wanted to say "this was kind of fun." Eddie felt a blush crawl across his face.

"Yeah this was fun" Richie smiled at Eddie from his side of the couch "I should be home from work around five tomorrow so you can just come over whenever... I don't care how late."

"Okay yeah" Eddie swung his legs to plant his feet on the ground "I get off at six, but I have to stop home again to let Winnie out."

"If you wanna bring her over you can" Richie just about interrupted Eddie to blurt out the sentence.

"I mean she's pretty crazy. I don't want her to hurt your hand or anything." Eddie worried.

"I'll be careful I swear" Richie leaned slightly towards Eddie which caused Eddie to blush all over again "and like what's she gonna do, rip my hand off?"

"No, she'll probably jump all over you and stuff... I don't know, let me think about it." Eddie said as he stood.

"Okay *Dad*" Richie giggled and lay back onto the couch, his curls sprawled across the yellow pillow.

"I'm not your fucking *Dad*...I just have to think about it damn..." Eddie wanted to change the subject "So what does your Dad do, he's probably like a food connoisseur or something knowing what I do about your mom..."

"Well..." Richie sat up again and folded his legs in front of him, facing Eddie "from what I understand Wentworth Tozier was a pretty good dentist, up until he died when I was two..." Eddie felt a chill run across the nape of his neck, understanding what it was like to have someone bring up your dead Dad, his face unknowingly fell into a look of sorrow.

"But it's okay because my Mom married my stepdad which brought along my beloved stepbrother Stan..." Richie jabbed Eddie's shoulder with his good hand. "It's okay really..."

"I'm sorry man..." Eddie's eyes examined Richie's expression, he had a small smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth and a sad look in his eyes "I mean I'd hate to say it but I know how you feel kind of...my dad passed away too." Eddie sorrowfully smirked at Richie.

"I'm sorry Eds" Richie placed his hand on his forearm, Eddie felt tingles rushing all around his skin underneath the comforting touch.

"No, it's okay, it was super long ago" Eddie's hands fidgeted together out of nerves resulting from the touch on his forearm. "At least your

Dad left you an awesome last name though, Tozier sounds cool, like a band or something... all I got was Kaspbrak like what the fuck is that, it sounds like a disease.”

Richie laughed and clapped Eddie on the shoulder “If you play your cards right, we can probably make an epic trade later in life...”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” Eddie said through a laugh.

“Haven’t you ever played Pokémon Eds?” Richie smirked and rolled his eyes, Eddie couldn’t help but notice the blush dusted across Richie’s cheeks and nose.

“Okay well, I’ll see you tomorrow *Richie Tozier*.” Eddie stood up and stretched before striding over to the door to slip on his shoes and coat, pocketing Richie’s gift for Winnow as he did so.

Richie stood as well and followed him through the kitchen “and I’ll see *you* tomorrow *Eddie Kaspbrak*” Richie paused before adding “...and possibly *Miss Winona Kaspbrak*.”

Eddie smiled and nodded before slipping out the door. On his walk home he thought about how fucked he was. He freaking *liked* Richie... *a lot*. His whole life plan of ignoring his true feelings for men were simply ruined. Eddie’s mind wondered to the thought of them simply holding hands with a sensual intention and it made Eddie’s stomach flip. He was head over heels for a man he met just yesterday, and he was embarrassed to even think about it.

Notes for the Chapter:

TW: Mentions of Deceased relatives

This chapter is a BEEF CAKE but chapter five is going to be an even BEEFIER CAKE believe it or not... 12000 words and I'm not even done.

5. Crab Rangoon

Richie couldn't shake Eddie from his mind, he blindly flew through the motions of work the next day. Luckily, they didn't have him in too many skits for the following Saturday in account of his injury. At some points in the day it barely registered that people were speaking to him, he lost count of how many times he recited 'I'm sorry what?'

The feeling of *dread* flooded his mind in spurts throughout the day, he knew Eddie for only a few days, and he felt as if he's known him forever... the feeling of dread came from the inevitable. One day Eddie will decide that Richie is too much to handle, to inappropriate, or frankly to *disgusting*. Disgusting because of his track record, girls and boys...he couldn't help it that his body couldn't just *choose* one. He hated that Josh's words followed him, but he couldn't help it at the same time. Who was Richie to assume everyone didn't feel this way...it's not like he was able to go around interviewing his community asking how they felt about Bisexuals, gross or pretty alright?

Thoughts and visualizations of his heart fluttering out of his chest at the mere touch of his hand mixed with thoughts of Eddie walking out of his life forever. *'I just don't understand how you could fuck girls...I can't get it out of my head'... 'Richie its all just too much you're out of control, this is over'... 'I just don't understand how you can say that about her...'*

"Hey, what's up with you?" Bev shook him out of his daze. He found himself to be sitting in one of the audience chairs, segregated from the group of actors on the stage running though a skit that Richie wasn't a part of.

"Bev I honestly don't even know." Richie's eyes found hers and she gave him a knowing look before crouching down to his ear.

"Meet me in the dressing room, lets talk about it huh?" She squeezed his shoulder walked away, towards the back of the stage.

Richie followed reluctantly; he knew that putting his feelings into words was difficult to do when his head was fogged up like this. He

didn't even know where to begin when he followed her into the small room, closing the door behind him. He slumped into one of the chairs, his good hand immediately jutting up to scratch at the back of his neck, a nervous tick.

They sat in silence for a while until Bev finally cut it with her words.

"Jesus who is this guy..." Bev didn't have to specify who she was referring to.

"He's Eddie Kaspbrak and he's the best God damn ER nurse you'll ever meet." His words came out in a sort of exhausted wine, he threw his head into his good hand and rested his elbow on his knee.

"Oh Richie, is that what this is? You have a crush?" Bev stood from her seat across from him and came over to him to rub circles into his back. She knew how Richie responded to touch, it provided him copious amounts of comfort.

"No, well I don't know... I just...he's so great Bev, he's like the sweetest person I've ever met but he's an asshole...but like, in a good way." Richie pushed his hair away from his forehead. God damn what he wouldn't give to be able to put his fucking hair up.

"I have no idea what that means but he sounds great."

"He kind of is..." Richie tugged at the curls that simply couldn't resist draping right in front of his face which was the most annoying thing ever when you could physically do nothing about it.

"So, what's the fuss?"

"I just don't want him to *leave*..." Richie's words were quiet, entirely out of character, entirely raw.

Bev knew exactly what he meant by this; she furiously hated every person that Richie was with in the past. The way they all dumped him for fucked reasons, sure Richie was a lot to handle sometimes but his good qualities *far* outweighed the bad. He was sweet, funny and caring amongst a thousand other great qualities that those fucks didn't stick around to learn about. All they cared about was how attractive he was, Richie cared deeply about each one, pouring all of

his time and heart into the relationships.

Even most of Richie's friendships didn't work out, he easily overwhelmed most people who couldn't simply *keep up* with him. None of them ended as badly as his romantic relationships however... they simply faded out of his life through aging, time marching through college semesters, or simply just not talking to him anymore.

"Well, all that means is that he didn't fit." Bev and Stan once talked him through one of his breakups through an analogy, relating him to a puzzle piece looking for the correct person to snap into place formed by a sturdy connection and edges running flush against each other. He related everyone in their lives to a puzzle, the pieces being the people in their lives that they loved, though the puzzle was small they fit together so well; Stan, Bev, Ben and Richie... "We're going to find your match Richie... I just know we will."

Richie ran a furious hand through his hair, which was replaced by Bev's thin delicate fingers combing the dark curls away from his forehead. Forcing Richie to plop his hand down on his lap and fiddle with the koban that Eddie so neatly wrapped around his hand the night before.

"I've only known him for two days Bev, why am I like this." A breathy laugh glided through his mouth following the sentence, rolling his head back to rest on the chair behind him enjoying the rake of Bev's fingers through his hair.

"Yeah it is a little early, but if ya know, ya know." Bev's voice was sweet.

"Know what?"

"You have to figure that one out for yourself..." Bev's fingers worked to rake his hair to the crown of his head, preparing to fasten it in a bun there.

"You know, he has a dog..." Richie smiled "and he said I remind him of her."

"How does he know you so well already?" Bev giggled.

“What? You think I’m a dog!?”

“Look at you melting all over this chair from me scratching your head? I wouldn’t be surprised if you start kicking your leg when I scratch behind your ear.” Bev laughed and fastened one of her purple hair ties around the knot on the top of Richie’s head. A few curls sprung free and she pushed them to frame his face and neck.

“Damn I guess you guys are right...” Richie laughed as he ran his hand down his face.

“Well he sounds cool Richie, I’m happy for you...” Bev looped her arms around his neck to give him an awkward hug.

“Yeah...” Richie was slightly amused about her use of the term ‘cool’ when describing Eddie.

He felt ten times better after his talk with Bev, she always knew just what to say to reel him back to earth. As he walked home, he sent Eddie a few texts.

Richie [5:05] : Don’t eat anything, I’m gonna get us food

Richie [5:06] : Do you like Pad Thai cus I’m gonna order us Pad Thai

Richie [5:08] : Nvm don’t answer that if u hate it ill make u something else

Richie [5:08] : Also bring Winnow PLEASE

The first thing he did when he got home was check up on Bowie and give him his dinner. He seemed to be settling in nicely and easily despite his injuries. He easily fell into the routine of feeding time and was picking up on how fun it was to walk across the keys of Richie’s laptop as he sat in the bathroom working on writing comedy skits and stand up routines that may never see the light of day.

Richie dreamed of being a director one day, being entirely in charge of the process of creating a movie is something that he heavily strived for. His dreams of doing stand up and performing comedy skits are simply an avenue he wanted to explore and have fun with on his road to the top.

He sat with Bowie for a while before calling his local Thai food restaurant to put his order in. Bowie weaved in and out of his legs as he sat on the lip of the clawfoot tub on the phone with the restaurant. He hungrily ordered probably way too much food, two large orders of vegetable Pad Thai, four spring rolls, a California roll, crab Rangoon, and a large carton of wonton soup. Way too much food...part of his idea was to order a large variety hoping that Eddie would enjoy some of it. The Thai food place close to his apartment was *mouth watering* the food there was entirely *delicious*. The food you could dream about...

Richie's phone buzzed, alerting him of the text response from Eddie.

Eddie Spaghetti [5:40] : We're pretty slow so I am going to be leaving on time

Eddie Spaghetti [5:40] : and I trust your judgement entirely about food but you really don't have to buy me anything, or at least let me pay you or something

Richie [5:41] : or something? ;)

Eddie Spaghetti [5:44] : CREEP.

Richie [5:44] : :P

Richie left to pick up their food, not minding if he had to wait at the restaurant for a few minutes if it wasn't ready yet. He has grown to love the owner of the restaurant, an older Thai woman who he loved talking too. Luckily and surprisingly, all of the food was ready when he got there, he paid and was on his way back home.

By the time he got home it was almost exactly six o'clock. Richie felt his nerves begin to take over, somehow, he was more nervous about him coming over tonight than he was the night before. The night

before Richie thought that Eddie meant strictly business and was pleasantly surprised when he stayed for dinner. He sat on the ground in the master bathroom, Bowie sauntered over to greet him, nuzzling his face and sharp plastic e-collar into Richie's knee.

"What am I gonna do man?" Richie glided his hand across Bowie's spine. To be fair he asked Bowie a true question... Richie could hardly ever accurately predict his actions or whims, he frequently let his guard down acting on an almost autopilot in conversation or interaction with people he was comfortable with... which was a dangerous game.

He felt his phone buzzing around in his pocket, alerting him of a call rather than a text, he glanced at the screen 'Eddie Spaghetti'. He quickly accepted the call and held the phone to his ear.

"Hey" Richie's mind went blank the second he decided that he didn't want to answer with a lame 'hello' resulting in a dorky 'hey.'

"Hi Richie, I just got home, and Winnow is eating now, I just wanted to ask if you still want me to bring her over, she can be a little insane." Eddie's voice sounded nervous.

"Yes of course I'm sure! I would love to meet her but if you honestly don't want to bring her...it's whatever..."

"I mean she's not *insane* she can just be kind of hyper and demanding to be played with and stuff. Oh, and she'll probably be a little weird at first because she gets nervous about new people, but she'll warm up quick." At some point through his speaking, the sound of his voice changed indicating he switched to speaker phone. There were sounds of fabric shifting and his voice going muffled. Richie blushed like a middle schooler at the thought of Eddie changing, stripping out of his adorable dark blue hospital scrubs... into something more comfortable for a night spent hanging out with him.

"So... does that mean she's coming or what?" Richie was eager for a response.

"I mean I guess..."

Richie felt his heart flutter with excitement...looking forward to the puppy energy he so desperately craved.

“FUCK I’m excited, okay I’m gonna go put on something nice to impress her...” Richie laughed “what’s her favorite color, I have a variety of button downs that she’d just *adore*...”

“Aren’t dogs like colorblind or something?” Richie heard Eddie struggling around with something, probably his coat.

“I don’t fucking know you’re the nurse.”

“Nursing school is so fucking far from being vet school...”

“Well then she’ll just have to deal with what I have on.” Richie sighed dramatically.

“I’m sure you look good” Eddie’s response was once again muffled and broken up by a clicking sound at some point.

“Oh, so you think I look good?” Richie’s heart just about beats out of his chest, prodding at Eddie was something he didn’t intend to react with but it just kind of flew out of his mouth before he could consider the consequences.

“What!? No-no I just...Okay we’re leaving now, see you in twenty.” Eddie was quick to hang up the phone sounding entirely flustered, but still coming over to hang out with Richie and with his *dog*.

Richie couldn’t be more excited, not only was Eddie eagerly, by the sound of it, coming over tonight, but he was bringing his best friend along to meet him. He gave Bowie one last scratch on the head before leaving the bathroom and flipping on some music, shuffling a collection of mellowed out folk songs, a playlist he made for the spring time, loving the soft feeling that came along with the acoustic sounds and scratchy voices. He adjusted the volume of the speakers and flopped himself onto the couch. He always appreciated this couch; it was his first *real* furniture purchase outside of the shitty furniture that usually was included in various apartments he rented through college. He remembered the day he bought the couch, he dragged Bev and Stan along to various furniture stores, plopping their

butts in just about every couch they had on display.

When they started to feel as if they were melting into the oversized cushions of the sofa, Richie gave no fucks about the price, not saying a word to Bev and Stan, who were both sporting unique shut eye expressions of *Zen*, as he stood and walked to the nearest sales associate, asking them to get this fucking couch delivered to his apartment as soon as physically possible. It was the best damn couch in the world. It was the host of comfort through many difficult conversations he shared with his beloved friends. It was the place in which he cuddled up with Bev and had their *conversation* ‘I think I love you but as like a best friend’ Bev initiated, ‘yeah me too, the sex was good but I don’t think I can do ya anymore Bevvie...no offence’ Richie giggled and Bev responded with a punch in the bicep. It was true what they said, they loved each other, there were no doubts about that, it just wasn’t that *kind* of love.

Richie was pulled from his thoughts by a knock at the door, he was surprised how he could zone out for twenty fucking minutes to think about a couch but that’s just how his day has been. He heaved himself up to standing and walked to open the door. Time stood still as he stood admiring Eddie’s choice of dress, finally seeing what he was so *quickly* shoving over his body on the phone, a tight pink polo with the top few buttons undone, exposing the triangle of his neck and collarbone. The shirt was accentuated by a pair of *tight* jeans, gripping his muscular legs so perfectly, but that wasn’t all...clipped around his waist was a fucking fanny pack...somehow completing the look.

“What’s the purse for Eds-” before Richie could finish however, the wind was knocked from his stomach. A pair of large paws shoved at his chest as a crazy-eyed but adorably so red golden retriever jumped and licked the air in front of Richie’s face. Overcome with joy and surprise, Richie followed along with his bodily instinct, taking a few steps back and crouching too the floor he experienced everything that Winnow had to give him, her entire body wiggled, almost *vibrated* as she propped her front paws onto Richie’s shoulders and licked just about his entire face. Richie couldn’t help but giggle and scratch at the sides of her belly, long silky red hair combing through his fingers as he did so.

“Well nice to meet you too” he said as he made an effort to stand, his legs were cramping from trying to support the wobbly weight.

When he was finally upright, he shed his glasses from his face to clean the slobber covered lenses on his shirt. Winnow circling his legs as he did so, dragging her pink leash across the ground, with her large tail whipping him and her head lolling all around on her shoulders staring at Richie with her goofy tongue-out kind but crazy eyed expression.

“You were saying about her being nervous?” Richie giggled and put his glasses back on, watching as Eddie pushed the door closed and kicked his shoes off to once again place them neatly next to Richie’s pile on the ground.

“She has never, and I swear all honesty here, EVER done that before.” Richie could tell that Eddie was a little shocked.

“Oh yeah I forgot to tell you she was my sister in a past life, we were just using you to get reacquainted...” Richie joked as he bent to scratch the side of Winnow’s belly as she leaned against his legs.

She was perfect, not only was she a beautiful dog, but Richie had already fallen in love with her personality. It was as if the universe told her ‘hey Richie Tozier really needs some affection dammit and you have got to give it to him as if your life depended on it’ and she took that request and ran with it. Defying all of her usual habits upon meeting new people to do so...

“I guess so, jeez...”

Richie hasn’t shaken the smile on his face since opening the door and seeing the wet dream that was Eddie’s choice of outfit, but now the smile grew some how at the way Eddie said ‘jeez’... never once in real life has Richie heard another person other than himself say the dumb word.

Richie intently watched as Eddie turned his back to him and unclipped the fanny pack around his waist to hang it on the wall above the mound of shoes, where his coat was just the night before. Richie used just about every ounce of force in his body to not allow

the thoughts coursing through his head to spill out threw his mouth, how the fuck does someone wear a *polo* and look *so damn good*. Not even to mention the fucking *jeans*...cupping everything that Eddie had to offer.

So, there he was, standing awkwardly staring with his mouth hung slightly open, Winnow sitting at his feet, leaning against his leg, also staring at Eddie...however the difference between the two was that she was gazing with love and Richie was gazing with *lust*.

“So Pad Thai huh?” Eddie broke the stiff silence.

“Yeah, have you had it before?” Richie tore his gaze away from the collar of Eddie’s shirt and walked to the kitchen island to fish through the large brown paper bag.

“Nope.” Eddie crouched and opened his arms for Winnow to come over to him, Richie’s heart just about melted as she sweetly and gently licked his cheek and wagged her tail. Eddie unclipped her leash and hung it on the same hook as the fanny pack.

“Well you’ll love it... I think” Richie set the various containers of food on the counter, multiple black flimsy plastic containers with clear lids, and a large clear plastic container of soup.

“Damn that’s a lot of food” Richie just about jumped out of his skin as Eddie spoke up just behind his shoulder, a laugh erupted from Eddie at the action “sorry...I didn’t mean to scare you...”

Richie couldn’t help but laugh as well, bowing his head and holding the countertop for balance. His heart rate had been going berserk since Eddie walked in the door, his nerves were off the charts.

“Christ Kaspbrak you’re going to give me a heart attack...” Richie said clutching his chest.

“Well after this meal that might just be how our night ends...” Eddie literally *giggled*, and it made Richie’s heart scream.

“I was fucking *starving* when I ordered...and I wanted to make sure you had something to eat if you didn’t like the Pad Thai.”

“That’s really nice of you Richie.” Eddie said as he sat down on one of the stools. His words caused Richie’s ears to warm. “But you really didn’t have to do this...like this had to have been so expensive, let me give you half or something...”

“No can do Eds...” Richie gleamed one of his shining smiles in Eddie’s direction as he tossed a pair of chopsticks in his direction, then turning to fish two bowls out of the cabinet and placed them on the counter.

“Well then I buy next time.” Eddie’s voice was a little smaller than it was before...*adorably* so. “Also, I have no idea how to use these” that damn giggle again.

“I guess I’ll just have to show you how then” Richie sighed sarcastically, fishing a fork and two spoons out of one of the drawers before walking around the counter.

“No, I want to learn!” Eddie said as Richie held the fork out to him.

Richie smirked. “Well alright then...”

They each pulled their chopsticks out of the paper sleeve, Richie positioning them expertly in his hand to try and figure out how to explain the process to Eddie.

“Okay, so... put one here like this...” Richie leaned closer to Eddie to show him where to place the chopstick in his hand, resting on the dip between his thumb and index finger and on the tip of his ring finger “then the other one goes up here...” he rested the other bamboo chopstick higher up towards the joint in the dip between his thumb and index finger, supported and controlled by the tips of his index and middle finger. He clapped the tips of the chopsticks together a couple times to demonstrate how to control them.

It was then that Richie looked at Eddie struggling, he placed the second chopstick too close to the first, without thinking, Richie reached to help him. He placed his own set down before doing so, not wanting to strain his hurt hand or lean too much closer to Eddie. He gently moved the sticks apart, trying his best to not touch too much of Eddie’s skin, in fear of the literal sparks that may start to fly at the

physical contact. He pushed the tip of the top chopstick more firmly into the grasp of Eddie's index and middle finger, having no choice but to allow their fingers to graze at the contact. Somehow Richie's brain short circuited, his fingers lingered on Eddie's for longer than his intent. Mostly out of fascination of the fact that there were no yellow bolts of light jumping around their hands, but simply a flutter in his heart and a tingle in his fingertips.

He jerked his fingers away, as to not make the situation weird, and snuck a glance at Eddie's face, who's eyes were still glued to his hand with a smirk across his lips. Wet and pink, assumedly from a recent bite or flick of his tongue. Eddie's eyes crept up to meet Richie's.

"Like this?" He clicked the sticks together a few times, not looking away from Richie as he did so.

"You got it Eds" Richie smirked at him and started to reach for the black containers, only breaking the eye contact when he had to look to see what he had grabbed.

"Nice hair" Eddie said, his gaze obviously still glued to Richie.

The compliment caught Richie entirely off guard; he forgot his hair was even tied back.

"Oh...thanks...nice" *ass, mouth, neck* "shirt."

"Thanks..."

Each of their cheeks flushed from the interaction. If Richie didn't know any better he would take the moment to run his hand from the side of Eddie's neck to his hand, entangling their fingers and pulling him into a tender kiss...but that's not something you do with someone you met just three days ago, and who you would like to keep around. So, he instead started to pry the lid off of one of the Pad Thai containers. Out of the corner of his eye Eddie followed suit.

Richie smiled to himself as he watched Eddie struggle with the chopsticks, but dammit he was determined to make them work for him and Richie admired that.

"You sure ain't no quitter Eds" Richie laughed.

“Fuck no I’m not” Eddie’s face scrunched together slightly, the determination evident now on his face.

“You show those sticks who’s boss...” Richie planted a slow gentle punch on Eddie’s shoulder, pushing him a little off balance.

A delicate smirk was flashed in his direction. Richie smiled back and then tore his gaze away to finally eat his food, because though Eddie was just about the most adorable person that Richie has ever seen in his life, he was fucking hungry.

As they ate Winnow explored Richie’s apartment, sniffing around for a place to lay. Settling for the couch...good choice.

They sat quietly and ate their food to the tune of the soft music. Eddie seemed to be enjoying the dish, Richie couldn’t help but draw his attention to the way his cheeks hollowed as he slurped the long rice noodles. Shaking his attention away, he reached for the carton of crab Rangoon, one of his favorite Asian Cuisine appetizers, groped the clear plastic lid off and popped the corner of one of the deep fried delicacies into his mouth, ripping the folded corner off and relishing in the flavor of the filling.

“What the fuck are *those*?” Eddie questioned?

“Crab rangoon, these were like my favorite growing up.” Richie peeled another one of the folded corners off and popped it into his mouth.

“You’re lucky you got to eat this stuff growing up, all I got was chicken and broccoli.” Eddie laughed.

“Sounds like a culinary dream Eds,” Richie wanted to learn more about Eddie’s life before becoming an ER nurse, he decided to delve into the subject further, “were you grounded from take out or something?”

“No, my mom just thought I had a thousand allergies” Eddie spoke almost nonchalant about the situation, “like I had a fake inhaler and stuff.” He reached for the container of crab rangoon.

“I’m sorry a *what*?” Richie was caught a little off guard, confused by

the situation.

“She had Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy so she always thought I was sick and allergic to a thousand things, I had like a whole pill container thingy with the days of the week on it and everything.”

“What is that?” Richie stabbed his chopsticks into his pile of noodles and leaned more to face Eddie as he spoke, entirely interested in what he was saying. Fiddling with the remaining half of the crab rangoon in his hands.

“Its basically like, she made up that I had a bunch of diseases and allergies and stuff and would take me to the doctor all the fucking time and I had a bunch of medications and stuff. It sucked; I wasn’t allowed to do anything because I was allergic to just about everything apparently.” Eddie paused for a minute with a look of consideration on his face “I don’t even know why I’m telling you all of his...” Eddie laughed, breathy and beautiful.

“No-no I want to hear” Richie said almost desperately, kicking lightly at Eddie’s foot that dangled in front of him, an action his mind decided upon after considering his crave for some sort of physical contact to reassure Eddie.

“Well that’s pretty much it...except the time with the pharmacist finally told me that my inhaler was fake, it fucked me up pretty bad... like I just kinda stuck with the routine of using it whenever I had what I *know now* to be the feeling of fear and like anxiety and stuff. It helped because it was *supposed* to help, you know?” Eddie’s eyes met Richie’s, who was making a concentrated and slightly confused face “it’s fucked up I know...” Eddie said as he plucked one of the fried pastries out of the container.

“Well it sure is a *unique situation*...” Richie said “is she still like that? Like does she still try to do all that stuff to you?”

“I mean kind of... like every time we talk on the phone, she’ll ask me when my last doctor’s appointment was and stuff. The last big event was when she was last in town, she tried to convince me that this was cancerous” Eddie grazed a beauty mark on his bicep “she tried to drag me to the hospital.” Eddie laughed which surprised Richie.

How brave, Richie thought, *how brave* would someone have to be to deal with the death of a parent and then have to deal with another one like *that*, constantly looking for something wrong, something to fix.

“You must be like super fuckin' tough then huh.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well just like, having to go through it with your father, then your mom putting you through hell and stuff, like you must be super fucking brave.” Richie decided it was okay to say what he really felt, dangerously comfortable with Eddie in this moment.

“Thanks, but I’m not” Eddie said blushing “and I went to like *years* of therapy about it.”

“Therapy is great” Richie said nodding as he ate the remaining crab ragoon that was up until this point, forgotten in his hands.

“Yeah, I did that whole thing and I had to go through like a detox of all of the medications I was on. It took a *long time*...I struggled for like the whole first year of college trying to figure everything out, trying to decide what I did and didn’t need, seeing the doctor like every other week testing for certain allergies and diseases I was taking the medications for. It turned out that I didn’t need *any* of them...” Eddie’s face was a little more solemn now, his speech switching from rapid to slow “like can you believe that? I was taking *serious medications* and I didn’t need any of them...”

Richie then placed a hand on his shoulder, “you don’t have to tell me this stuff Eds...but I’m so happy you did because now I know how fucking awesome you are” Richie smiled “you’re like the strongest person I know.” Richie was never good with talking to people when he was on the other side of a confession or a mental hardship like this, but his voice and eyes projected his words genuinely. He could tell that somehow his words got through to Eddie’s heart because his face softened and his head dipped into a small bow, Richie melted when Eddie’s eyes met his own through his long lashes.

“Thanks Rich...” Richie released his shoulder after giving it a

reassuring squeeze “now how the fuck do I eat this?” Eddie held up the crab rangoon with smirk, his face still red from the interaction.

“You just kind of *do it*.” Richie giggled.

Eddie tugged at opposite corners of the rangoon, separating the middle and exposing the cream-cheese filling speckled red with crab meat.

“Okay that’s not at all what I meant...” Richie cackled “just shove it in your mouth!”

“Jesus so demanding Tozier...” Eddie smirked and shook his head before biting the corner of the destroyed deep-fried pastry. He blinked up at Richie and his eyes widened, “Holy shit this is so fucking good!”

“I know right” Richie smirked at Eddie, cream cheese on the corner of his mouth.

Eddie caught his eyes and blushed, Richie kicked himself, he really had to cool it with his wandering eyes and lingering gazes, or Eddie will be storming out of here before they could even think about changing Bowie’s bandages. Richie broke the gaze and reached for another crab rangoon, drawing his attention back to eating. He tapped his chopsticks along to the smooth music in the background, bobbing his head as well, the loose curls framing his face bobbing around in his peripheral vision.

“So tell me more about *your* family” Eddie said.

“Well...I have an awesome step-brother Stan, he’s kind of blunt and weird at first but once you break through his exterior he’s super caring and funny, then there’s my mom who you already love apparently, Maggie Tozier-Uris is a married women I’ll have you know” Richie teased Eddie.

“Shut up dipshit I don’t want to bone your Mom!” Eddie was flustered to all hell.

“...AND then there’s my stepdad who’s pretty cool, he’s super quiet but he loves us so it’s okay, Donald Uris is his name in case you

wanna hang with him too.” Richie giggled and prodded an elbow into Eddie’s bicep.

“I don’t want to bone your step-Dad *either!*” Eddie glared at him but tried to keep the conversation going. “How about your friend Bev? How did you guys meet?”

Oh boy, here we go, now or never, if he told Eddie *the truth*, he’d be under a weird impression...but if he made his relationship preferences clear then he’d have to tell Eddie that he was bisexual. Richie felt his heart beat *hard*... now or never he figured...

“Okay...are you ready for this one Eds? ‘Cus it sure is a *zinger* I’ll tell you that...” Richie sighed and scratched the back of his neck.

“Uh I guess I am...” Eddie’s words came out more as a question.

Richie thought about what to say for a second as he readjusted in his chair, leaning forward a little to rest his elbows on his knees.

“So, freshman year of college I get invited to a party, ya know ‘cus I’m so exciting and fun” Richie bobbed his head and batted his lashes resulting in a smirk from Eddie to break the tension “and basically Bevvie is there and I just think damn she’s *beautiful*, ‘cus she really is like the gayest man alive would probably consider going after her, but anyway I snag her and we talk for like the entire party... we clicked really well and it was almost like love at first sight I guess you can say...” Richie wanted to add *kind of like when I first met you Eds huh, how’s about that*... but he didn’t...

“So we tried the dating thing, even getting busy a few times and everything...but then we both came to the realization that dating just like isn’t our thing. I mean I love her, and she loves me, I hope, but it just isn’t *like that*...” explaining his relationship with Bev with the context of intention to date upon meeting in mind was very hard to explain.

When Richie finally made eye contact with Eddie, he could tell that he was hanging onto every word he was saying, listening with extreme focus, not even eating as Richie spoke, just *listening*.

“I’m sure you get what I’m trying to say...” Richie squinted at Eddie, trying to see if he understood that Bev was simply his best friend and nothing more.

Eddie nodded.

“Yeah, so she’s amazing, like she can read my mind I think” Richie laughed thinking about earlier that day at work “and she is literally the reason I didn’t fuck up my life in college...” Eddie’s head tilted and his eyebrows inched closer together *so fucking adorable* “I basically went through a stupid breakup and it really fucked me up and I spent the semester combing through people and drinking until I couldn’t stand just about every other night.”

Richie shook his head and clenched his jaw “I shouldn’t be telling you all of this I just-I just need to ramble until I get to my point...” Eddie made a look that was stuck between a smirk and sheer worry.

Richie sat up and rolled his neck and shoulders a bit, swallowing the excess saliva in his mouth before continuing. “So I was totally deviating there for a minute, basically she helped me through a break up that I don’t think I can really talk about with you yet until I share a few more things about myself...” Richie suppressed the urge to bounce his leg which caused his mind to focus on how much his stomach was flipping around.

“Richie, you don’t have to tell me anything if you don’t want to” Eddie touched his knee “you look like you’re gonna have a panic attack or something...”

“Eddie I am very bisexual!” The words came out rushed and loud, almost as if he was trying to say them as clearly as he could and as fast as he could before his brain told him to shut up. His hand snapped over his mouth and his eyes went wide, his injured hand trembled in his lap as he waited for Eddie’s reply.

He laughed. It wasn’t the kind of laugh that people did when someone did something stupid or the kind of laugh that ass holes did when a kid dropped his books in the hallway in middle school, it was a laugh that sounded almost relieved. A laugh that found the situation amusing but not a sadistic kind of amusing, a laugh that

made you tilt your head and squint at the one it was intended for. The laugh was short, and his face was soft, his hand still lingered there on his knee, a stream of comfort flowed from Eddie's hand all the way to Richie's heart. The laugh though short lived, was beautiful, it somehow said a thousand words without saying any at all. It said, 'Richie it's okay to be that way,' it said, 'Richie don't be so afraid to tell people stuff like that,' it said, 'Richie I am not leaving.'

They sat staring at each other for a minute, Richie's face fell from its tense, high-brow look of shock and fear, settling more for a mirror of Eddie's relaxed and flushed expression.

"You know for how much I run my fucking mouth... that is the first time I've said that out loud." Richie sighed, his voice a little shaky. His hand dropped back into his lap.

"Well, I'm happy you told me."

It was simple what Eddie said, but the way it warmed Richie's entire *soul* wasn't simple at all. The words sang through his brain, chiming over and over again. Richie had prepared himself for the worst when he ultimately decided to say fuck it and spill his guts. He pictured Eddie to be grossed out and to storm out of his apartment, but he was instead rewarded with the sweetest expression and such kind words. Moments ago, Richie thought he ruined everything, deciding sooner rather than later would hurt a little less but now he felt free.

Eddie's hand snuck its way into Richie's lap to hold his hand, his touch so delicate, warm and soft. Richie couldn't notice before how smooth Eddie's hands were when they were touched medically or instructionally against his own. Richie held him back, to let him know it was okay. Richie ran his thumb over the back of Eddie's hand, his skin was peach skin, so soft under the pads of his thumb. He never wanted to let it go. He felt his heart rate actually slow by the contact, where before the conversation it would have been thrusting it's way out of his chest. It was still pounding out of excitement but there were no more nerves, it was joy, it was comfort. Richie flipped their hands over together, the back of Eddie's hand rested against his thigh, he ran his index finger against the guitar string of tendons and veins on Eddie's wrist. His touch so light he saw goose bumps travel up Eddie's forearm.

“Richie...why were you so scared?” Eddies voice was whisper soft but not a whisper at all, sincerity oh so evident.

All Richie could do was shut his eyes and smile; Eddie really knew how to get it all out on the table. Richie wasn't upset about it at all, it was somehow so *easy* to tell Eddie these vulnerable facts about himself. If it were anyone else in his life he would simply put on a straight or gay facade and tell them that he met Bev at a party, and they hit it off as friends. He couldn't help wanting to be genuine with Eddie, something in his brain told him he had to be, so he listened.

“Well...” Richie laughed a little before continuing, still embarrassed about the whole situation. “So, I was dating this guy Josh...and he was so great at first Eds, we laughed together, and I felt like I could be myself around him. We were only together for like three or four months which is why I feel so dumb about the whole thing...” Eddie squeezed his hand as if to say *fuck that your feelings are valid* “basically we were talking about our exes and he was like bitching about his or whatever...when I started talking about mine he got all weird.”

Richie couldn't look up from their hands on his lap as he spoke, “He got weird...because there were girls and boys on the list you know...” Richie turned their hands back over and involved the fingertips of his injured hands with the grasp “A few days later he came over and just totally went off on me, he was saying all this bull shit about how nasty I am and shit for sleeping with girls...some of the stuff he said was so fucking mean I cant even tell ya Eds it'll hurt your brain...” He chuckled a little.

Eddie shook his head and rested his mouth against the palm of his free hand and propped his elbow on his knee, leaning forward, staring at their hands.

“I think it fucked me up so much because he kept saying it...he kept saying the word...like it was *bad*...”

Eddie nodded.

“After that I just didn't know what to do... at first I thought I had to commit to one. Like just fuckin' choose *one* and I can just peacefully

live my life but obviously that is a fucked-up way to think.”

“Yeah” Eddie’s voice was muffled against his palm.

“So yeah pretty much I was afraid you’d scream at me and leave.” Richie laughed and held Eddie’s hand a little tighter.

“Well I’m happy you didn’t tell me his last name...” Eddie said, dead pan serious.

“Why’s that?” Richie was a little nervous.

“Because I don’t know what the fuck I’d do when I found him.” Eddie picked his face up out of his hand to reveal his face to Richie. It almost ran a chill down Richie’s spine, it wasn’t the scowl he received plenty of times before, it was a genuine look of pure *anger*. Richie was willing to bet that if someone were to splash drops of water on his forehead in this moment they would steam right off.

“Cool down big guy, Bev already took care of that...” Richie giggled and jiggled Eddie’s hand around a little bit, releasing the tension a little in his face.

“What did she do?” Eddie’s eyes widened and his mouth fell parted as he waited eagerly for a reply.

“I’ll let her tell you that one some-day buddy” Richie smiled and glanced back down at their hands. Eddie’s hands were smaller than his own, where Eddie’s were tan, Richie’s were fair, where Eddie’s were trimmed, Richie’s were chewed.

Eddie sighed “yeah...we should probably take care of Bowie huh...”

“Yeah...”

Both of them stared at their hands, waiting for the other to make the first move to pull away. Finally, it was Richie who moved, motioning his thumb back and forth against the soft skin once more before standing.

They both put the lids back on their unfinished food. The soup, sushi, and spring rolls remained untouched along with most of their Pad

Thai and one serving of crab rangoon. Eddie stacked the black plastic containers and carried them towards the fridge, Richie close behind with the carton on soup. They shelved the food and awkwardly stood in front of each other in the middle of the kitchen.

Richie could sense that Eddie wanted to do *something*, and Richie wasn't sure if he was emotionally prepared for whatever that was. Eddie inched towards him slowly, obvious nerves coursed through his body about whatever he was about to do. When he was close enough, he reached out to hold Richie's good hand again, holding it with both of his own.

"Can I hug you?" Eddie's voice was small again, if Richie was ten steps backwards, he would have had no idea that he even spoke.

Richie's lips fell into a smile and nodded; he didn't move at all, he quite honestly was fine with Eddie holding his hand forever, but he was more so letting Eddie pace the interaction. Eddie was obviously far more nervous about the interaction than Richie. His eyes were almost fearful when the question slipped from his lips, a question that Richie hoped one day he would be comfortable enough to partake in without having to ask.

Eddie held Richie's hand still with his right, their arms forming a strike between their bodies, defining the space. Eddie's left hand released from its grasp on Richie's hand and trailed slowly up his arm, with a touch so delicate it sent shivers down his spine and up his scalp. Eddie stopped when his hand reached one of Richie's broad shoulders, his other dropped Richie's hand and touched Richie's chest, close to his collar bone. Eddie's face was focused and flushed, his eyes trailed to meet Richie's who flashed his warm, closed mouth smile. Eddie smiled in return, then quite literally *snaked* his arms around Richie's neck and pushed their bodies close together standing on his tiptoes to accommodate their height difference.

Richie started with his hands simply rested on Eddie's back, worried about scaring him off with too much affection too fast. Richie felt Eddie's arms tighten around his neck and felt the muscles underneath the pink fabric flex as Eddie pulled Richie even closer, Richie took this as his cue to pour all he had into the hug. His long lanky arms wrapped tightly around Eddie, his left, hand injured, squeezed

Eddie's ribcage, his right, looped securely around Eddie's shoulders, his hand rested firmly next to the back of Eddie's neck, fingers exploring the skin there. Eddie was soft, warm, sturdy, and comforting... the hug was everything that Richie needed.

Eddie's face found its way into the crack of his arm and Richie's neck, Richie's heart flooded with happiness and warmth, Richie sighed into the embrace dropping his head to nose against Eddie's hair. Sweet sandalwood engulfed his senses, Richie breathed him in deeply. Thumbing across the back of his neck, tickling the hairs there which only caused Eddie to bury his head deeper into the embrace.

Richie felt as if he could cry, not many people could listen to him ramble on for fifteen minutes and then want to hug him afterwards, let alone hug him like *this*. Richie swayed them along to the music, *Slow it Down* by the Lumineers. He felt Eddie's smile against his neck. They swayed together for a minute, sinking deeper and deeper into the embrace.

"You don't have to ask you know..." Richie whispered into Eddie's ear.

"Hmm?" Eddie hummed and Richie *felt it* the vibrations in Eddie's back and chest so solid and real.

"This, you don't have to ask to hug Eds" Richie whispered into his ear again and loosened his grip on Eddie's back, dropping his arms to loop around his waist. "I could do this forever."

"I just wanted to make sure, I didn't want to catch you of guard or anything..." Eddie pulled his face from its spot nuzzled in Richie's neck to speak properly.

They fell back into a sweet sort of silence, Eddie nuzzled back into Richie's neck. Chills flooded Richie's spine as Eddie's arm shifted and settled draped in a way to thumb the back of Richie's ear, digits curled around the back of his neck. Richie held back every urge to plant a kiss to the side of Eddie's head, consideration drawn over how nervous Eddie had been to even do this. Richie felt as if their physical hearts clambered through their chests and were hugging in between them. The hug was just that kind, that genuine, that warm.

"I could really do this all day but we had better take care of Bowie..." Eddie's hand fell from its grip on Richie's neck and traced a line down his arm.

"Yeah..." Richie's arms fell as Eddie took a few steps back. "Thanks, Eds..."

"For what?" Eddie seemed to be taken aback a little, genuine wonder behind the question.

"Just...everything." Richie's smiles were usually genuine but the one that spread across his face in that moment was pure, it was completely uncontrolled by Richie's head, it stemmed entirely from his heart.

Eddie smiled back, his cheeks were flushed so beautifully, freckles accented on his nose and cheeks by the pink skin.

Caring for Bowie's injuries was far easier than the night before, Eddie worked faster, knowing more of what to expect now, and Richie understood more know of how to restrain him appropriately. Holding him gently but secure, tucked under his arm. When they were finished, they sat with him on the ground for a while, until Bowie became sick of them and walked to snuggle into his bed. They took this as their cue to leave.

Eddie flung himself onto the couch dramatically, and snuggled into Winnow, she was surprised by the sudden jolt but was overcome with joy when she saw that it was her favorite person tucked behind her. Richie couldn't help but watch as her tail wagged and she licked all over his face, Eddie's face scrunched into an almost scowl, obviously kind of disgusted by the whole dog slobber ordeal but putting up with it because it was Winnow and she was perfect.

"Hey, you want to watch a movie or something?" Richie asked.

"Yeah sure!" Eddie hugged Winnow close to his body.

"Well do you have a preference? I've got like a thousand movies and Netflix and shit so hit me with your best shot, your heart's desire, your mind's eye..." Richie walked dramatically towards the couch as

he spoke, waving his hands around as he spoke.

“I honestly don’t care, as long as it’s not like a boring action movie or something... I can’t fucking stand those.”

“Damn Captain America better watch his back” Richie crouched to look through the cabinet his TV was propped up on, combing his eyes along his movies to see if anything stood out to him. “Eds is coming for his whole career.”

“They’re just all the SAME...it gets boring after a while like *‘oh no there’s a villain coming, we better kill him and destroy the whole ass city while we’re at it!’* Like reading comics are one thing, I liked reading those when I was a kid, but these damn movies just annoy me for some reason.” Eddie propped his arm up and held his fist against his head as he spoke.

“How’s about this fuckin’ gem?” Richie reached for the movie ‘What We Do in the Shadows’ and tossed it to Eddie. Who picked it up and looked at it for a second.

“I have never heard of this ever, is it a horror movie?” Eddie seemed a little nervous.

“Would you be scared if I said yes?”

“NO... I was just wondering...” Eddie held the movie out to Richie to put it on.

“Don’t be afraid, it’s just a comedy” Richie winked at Eddie as he stood to grab the movie “and it’s from New Zealand I think so that’s why you haven’t heard of it.”

Eddie adjusted so that he was sitting upright, next to the giant green pillow, similarly to how he was last night. Winnow got up and adjusted her position on the couch as well, scooting closer to Eddie and resting her head on his lap. He combed his fingers through her fur and she closed her eyes to thoroughly enjoy the action.

Richie popped the movie into the Play Station 4 and adjusted all of the settings on the TV and sound system to display the movie accordingly. Once everything was situated, he turned to sit in the

couch and was caught by Eddie's hand on his left wrist.

"Wait, we should take this off" Eddie's fingers started to search for the cut end of the koban that was fastened against itself on Richie's hand. "You should let some air at it."

"Oh God" Richie was disgusted with how his hand looked. He felt queasy even thinking about it.

"It's gonna be fine, you big baby" Eddie smirked at him and started to unravel the koban.

Richie couldn't help but make a face, bracing himself for the sight of the wound. Eddie's fingers dug gently underneath the gauze, tugging it gently off of Richie's hand.

"See it looks fine Richie" the cut was scabbed over and nasty looking to Richie, but he trusted Eddie's opinion.

"Whatever you say doc, I think I'm gonna blow chunks if I look at it long enough." Richie held his hand up to his face admiring the nasty cut.

"Well then don't fucking look at it genius." Eddie giggled and poked Richie's arm. Then he shoved the old gauze and koban into his hand insinuating for Richie to throw it away.

"I will say you have got a point, but I don't know if I can..." Richie said as he walked to the garbage, glancing at the gnarly cut before stepping on the lever to open the lid and tossing the gauze and koban in.

"Also try not to touch anything just like leave it alone. You really don't want that getting infected."

"What are you a mind reader or something, I was just thinking about scratching my bare ass." Richie joked as he flung himself onto the couch.

"Eww Richie that's so fucking disgusting." Eddie's face scrunched up and his words were rushed.

Richie laughed and played the movie, stealing one more glance at the state of his palm before resting it on the arm of the couch, draping it in such a way to hang his hand limply suspended in the air.

Across the couch Eddie situated himself in such a way that made Winnow stand and walk to the other side of the couch, instead lying to rest her head on Richie's lap.

"Hey there sweetie" he said and scratched at the back of her ears.

Eddie swung his legs up onto the couch to invade the space where Winnow once was, pushing one leg into the crack behind Winnows body, knee pointed to the ceiling, the other leg folded behind her, lying flat. He turned his torso to watch the movie and was adorably interested, he was even smirking and silently laughing at times. Richie couldn't help but smile, not necessarily at the movie but at Eddie for finding it so funny. He's seen the movie countless times, it was one of his favorites, he was excited that Eddie seemed to be enjoying it too.

At some point during the movie Winnow leapt off the couch, to spread her body across the cool wooden floor in the kitchen. Richie took advantage of the free real estate and swung his legs up onto the couch, scooting a little bit into the warm spot left there from Winnow. He felt Eddie shift on the couch as well, his leg that was once propped up against the back of the couch scooted to rest his foot in the curve that the back of Richie's legs made, his knee falling to rest against the back of the couch.

Richie could only imagine what Eddie probably looked like right now, too nervous to look because of the visual his brain produced. Eddie's arm looped around the back of his head, of which was turned to watch the TV which protruded the tendons in his neck, dramatically shadowing shapes of triangles into the dreamiest parts of his neck. His legs parted; muscular thighs strained against the tight fabric of his jeans.

Richie's mind got the better of him as he flashed a look at Eddie, who was every drop of the visual Richie conjured in his mind. He was more though, because in Richie's mind's eye, Eddie's eyes weren't squinted by the smile that was formed on his face, amused by the

movie. He looked so happy, happy to be here with Richie, happy to be watching a movie that Richie loved. Happy...

His gaze must have been heavy because Eddie turned to look at Richie, he quickly looked away, hoping that Eddie didn't notice. Then he felt Eddie's other leg join the one that was planted behind Richie's legs, his feet pressed together, and his leg fell to rest against the back of Richie's knee. Richie smirked, now happy that he had been caught. Richie was fascinated by how easy it was to be like this with Eddie already, it had been three fucking days...

Eddie's courage must have seeped through to Richie because he decided to reach his hand to rest it against Eddie's calf. Windshield whipping at the fabric, wishing that it wasn't there. His hand stretched around a good portion of the limb.

They sat like that for a while until the movie was over and the credits started to roll. Richie was the first to sit up, his left arm cramping from its position. He swung his right leg out from underneath Eddie's and shoved it into the crack that Eddie's leg made with the back of the couch. Eddie tucked his foot underneath the bend knee of his other leg as he sat up and stretched his arms. Richie watched Eddie's toned arms stretch to the sky then his attention was pulled further down south to where the pink polo rode up to expose a line of tan skin. The effect that Eddie was having on Richie in this moment could be cause for a heart attack if Richie was fifty years older, everything about Eddie in the position, framed by Richie's long legs was straight out of a fantasy.

When Eddie fell from his stretch, he dragged a hand down Richie's knee to rest on his ankle.

"So, how'd you like the movie?" Richie sat up to better gaze at Eddie's face.

"I thought it was really funny" Eddie said, "how'd you even find out about it?"

"I think Bev found it and showed it to me." Richie couldn't entirely remember but he remembered her being involved somehow. "What was your favorite character?"

Eddie smirked and sat up to mirror Richie amused by the pop quiz, "I don't know, I think Viago was my favorite but the one with the long hair was the funniest...what's his name again?"

"Vladislav...dead but delicious" Richie said in a perfect impression.

Eddie giggled "Yes, yes he was the funniest."

"I think so too, fuck Deacon though right?" Richie laughed, no one ever favors Deacon, it's not that the character was bad or anything, he was just simply outshined by Viago and Vladislav.

Eddie laughed and crossed his legs "Yeah fuck that guy."

Richie smirked at him for a minute, he couldn't believe that he managed to get Eddie over here to begin with, let alone had him laughing on the couch over one of his favorite flicks. He was so beautiful when he laughed, the way his neck flexed, and his eyes squinted together, his mouth falling open tweaking a bit to the side, pink lips framing a set of pearly white teeth and a pink tongue. Richie could watch him laugh forever and it would never get old.

Their gazes met and Eddie's dark doe eyes were glassy from laughter, his features were soft, a contrast from their usual resting face. He had a smirk of his own tugging at his lips, ever so pink and wet from his habit of licking and chewing at them. As if on cue his tongue darted out to catch his bottom lip, tugging it into his mouth and running his top teeth across it as it slowly pulled back out.

Richie's hand twitched with the urge to run his thumb across it, so pink and so soft. Eddie took hold of Richie's good hand, staring down at it, running his thumb down his fingers as if trying to measure their length. His touch ever so soft and delicate. He laced the fingers of Richie's right hand with his own right hand forming a slash across the space between them, similarly to before he ran his left hand up Richie's arm, his face stuck in a state of fascination.

Richie's arm sprung goosebumps in reaction to the delicate feather light touch. Eddie's fingers explored Richie's shoulder for a moment then smoothed across his collarbone. His touch trailed along Richie's neck, who couldn't help but swallow the excess saliva in his

mouth in that moment, a gentle finger moved from the force of his Adams apple, Eddie's face fell from a fascinated concentration into a smirk. His hand grasped the back of Richie's neck more firmly now and thumbed across the lobe of his ear.

"Can I..." his words trailed off and a blush flooded his cheeks, Richie started to smile expecting him to ask if they could hug again "kiss you?"

Richie's jaw fell slightly, parting his lips, his eyebrows inched higher on his forehead and his eyes widened. He was knocked entirely speechless from the gentle touches on his neck and the words that flowed from Eddie's mouth, all he could do was eagerly nod.

Eddie smirked again and moved one of his legs to drape over one of Richie's thighs. He unlaced their fingers and involved his free hand in the gentle touches across Richie's body, starting at the triangle of his neck and trailing down his chest to grip his waist.

Richie felt close to fainting, no one has ever touched him so kindly, so gently... Richie moved his own hand to cup Eddie's face, palm over his ear and finger's parting into his soft hair, shaded a caramel brown dream.

Richie could tell that Eddie was nervous about leading the kiss, but every shade of lust and want flashed through his brown doe eyes. Richie ran his thumb across his bottom lip, it was every ounce of soft and dreamy as he imagined it to be. Eddie smirked at him and tugged Richie closer by the neck, instead of leaning in to connect their lips, Richie instead dodged to tease at his cheek, planting a kiss to the soft skin just under his cheekbone where it dimpled when he laughed. He dropped his hand to thumb across Eddie's other cheek. He caressed and kissed many other cheeks before but none of the interactions felt nearly as electric as it did holding Eddie like this.

Richie felt Eddie relax into the touch, taking the moment to release the kiss and inch closer to his mouth, pecking another kiss against his cheek. His skin was buttery smooth against Richie's lips, but it was nothing compared to the sensation to come. Eddie pulled away and held Richie's chin, lightly pinching the tip of it, his eyes flickered from Richie's eyes to his lips, parted slightly.

Eddie inched forward, tipping his head to the right ever so slightly, Eddie fluttered his eyes closed and Richie did the same. The touch against his lips was silk, light as a feather and entirely perfect. A hand crept up the back of Richie's neck and tugged at his hair, pulled taught into a knot at the top of his head still. Richie couldn't help but smile into the kiss and Eddie took advantage of it, darting his tongue out to flash across his teeth. Richie parted his mouth, fully entranced in how Eddie was leading the kiss, pacing so slow but so certain.

Eddie's hand on Richie's waist crept up to tug the hair tie out of his hair, a release of tension on his scalp eased through the sensation with immediate fingers entertaining and scratching about it. Richie suppressed a need to moan, fearing it would scare Eddie away, instead his hand gripped low on his waist, thumbing the fabric hoping that it would creep up eventually to feel his skin.

The kiss was magic, their lips locked and glided together as if they were meant too. Eddie lightly tugging at his hair was the only thing keeping him here on earth, the kiss was everything and more than Richie imagined. Eddie was so gentle but so firm.

The hem of Eddie's shirt gave way and Richie thumbed across Eddie's warm skin. A sound erupted from Eddie that was between a gasp and a moan and it made Richie's brain spin. He was seconds from going entirely feral, Eddie just kept getting *better*. Richie wanted to draw that sound out of him again and he knew just what to try to do so. He disconnected the kiss and trailed along Eddie's sharp jaw; he pressed his lips to the spot just under his ear lobe Eddie sighed into the kiss. Richie darted his tongue across the spot as if to test the waters, when Eddie tipped his head slightly to allow more access, he ran his teeth along the spot, and there it was, the *sound... music to Richie's ears*.

"So fucking pretty..." Richie whispered before caring for the spot a little more. Biting and sucking against it gently.

"Richie..." Eddie's voice sounded wrecked already "...*Jesus*."

"Richie *Tozier*" Richie corrected.

"*You're such a fucking dork...*" Eddie sighed into the sentence.

Richie smiled against his skin and trailed kisses along his neck to repeat the process closer to Eddie's collarbone. As he worked Eddie started to tug at his hair, gasping as he did so. Richie couldn't help but groan against his skin and move his hand further up Eddie's side, palm flat against the smooth skin ever so warm.

Eddie yanked Richie off of his neck by the hair and pressed their lips together again, his mouth felt just as electric as it did moments before. Tongues dancing together as if they were made to. Richie whined as Eddie pushed a hand through his hair at his forehead, pushing it back away from his eyes, a gesture so kind and simple that made his heart sing.

Eddie smiled in response to Richie's whine, and Richie's heart was suddenly a puddle on the floor. Richie's hand fell from its spot on Eddie's waist to graze his thigh draped across his own, his thumb firmly pressed into the seam of fabric on the inside of his thigh as he ran his hand slowly up and down.

Eddie disconnected the kiss and dropped his head to rest on Richie's shoulder, "*Fucking Christ Richie....*" Eddie's eyes were glued to the motion of Richie's hand on his thigh. Richie turned and kissed into Eddie's hair.

"Richie...I-I can't go any further..." Eddie's voice sounded completely wrecked.

"S'okay Eds don't worry..." Richie grumbled into Eddie's hair.

"Can I tell you something?"

Richie stopped rubbing Eddie's thigh before his situation in his pants grew any worse. He reached for one of Eddie's hands and held it resting on top of his thigh instead. "Of course you can, that's like our *thing* right now."

Eddie sat up and took a deep breath before he spoke. "That was my first kiss..." His face furiously blushed at the confession.

"Are you fucking kidding me? That was like the best kiss I've ever had in my life." To say that Richie was shocked would be an

understatement.

“Really?” Eddie’s embarrassment washed out of his expression slightly.

“Fuck yeah Eds! You got the fuckin’ moves man!” Richie poked his shoulder for emphasis.

“You’re just saying that...”

“No seriously! I had like an out of body experience at one point I swear on my life.” Richie squeezed Eddie’s hand.

Eddie blushed and stared at their hands, his face looked kind of sad, his eyebrows were pushed together, and he held a slight frown on his mouth.

“Hey what’s wrong?” Richie shifted, leaning a little closer and squeezing Eddie’s hand.

“Nothing I just...” Eddie said “I just feel weird...like I feel like I did something wrong...”

“Eddie no you didn’t do anything wrong! I’m serious man, that was like so fuckin’ hot it’s insane...” Richie scoffed into a smile.

“No-no not like that...I just have never really done that before because I thought it was...*wrong*...” Eddie seemed kind of embarrassed now.

Richie nodded and waited for Eddie to continue.

“Like my mom hated our gay neighbors growing up and stuff.” Eddie’s shoulders shook along to a silent laugh “...It sounds so stupid-”

“No Eddie it’s not stupid...she had you thinking all these damn lies growing up, it was toxic, your strong ass took those thoughts and fucking destroyed them, well most of them I guess.”

“She always said that they were gonna get aids and shit too, like how fucked is that!?” Eddie seemed to be getting a little choked up.

“Pretty fucked up if you ask me...”

“*Super* fucked up...and like she always tries to hook me up with girls and stuff...and I just can't like do anything with them...” Eddie paused to swallow the assumed lump in his throat. “I kind of just figured one day I'll get with one of them you know, just repress and forget about everything and live a normal life without any bull shit or hardships but now I just don't know anymore...like she'd fucking have a heart attack if I tell her I'm gay... I've had nightmares about it honestly. She'd think this is so fucking wrong...” Eddie's voice sounded raw and wrecked, his breathing seemed to be labored and his eyes were blinking rapidly, obvious anxiety boiling to the surface.

“Hey-hey hold on listen to me” Richie dropped Eddie's hand to grip the side of his neck. “What about this is wrong? Throw away everything that your mom said and think to yourself honestly what is so wrong about us and what we just did?”

“Nothing...” His brown eyes flicked up to meet with Richie's blue.

“Exactly, and all that matters is that you and I know that, who fucking cares about what she thinks? Who fucking cares about what anyone thinks?” Richie stroked Eddie's pink cheek with his thumb. “You deserve to be happy with *who you want to be with*, not with some bitch your Mom picked out.”

Eddie smirked, his eyes were glassy now.

“Thank you Richie...”

Richie pulled him into a hug, Eddie's head resting on his shoulder as they held each other close.

“Are you weirded out now?” Eddie said after a few seconds.

“What do you mean?” Richie said as he stroked his back along the points of his spine.

“Just 'cus like I've never...and you've had so much... experience?”

“Well that's one way to put it.” Richie giggled. “And no Eds, it doesn't weird me out that you're a big ole virgin.”

“Shut up!” Eddie smacked at Richie’s bicep and pulled out of the hug.

“Sorry, sorry, sorry!” Richie was still giggling as he held his arms up in protection.

Eddie sighed and flopped down to lay on the couch.

“I meant like, are you out off now that I’m not really ready to do anything like that...” Eddie spoke with his hands, putting emphasis on the ‘that.’

“No Eddie I’m not goin’ anywhere, I don’t care if we don’t do *anything* I just really like hanging out with you...and if one day we get to do stuff like that then I’d be honored to *show you the ropes*.” Richie poked at Eddie’s leg.

“Oh my God you’re so fucking weird...” Eddie laughed and covered his face with his hands.

“I can’t help it man, I have like no filter.”

“Oh, I figured that out.” Eddie sat up again. “We should probably take care of your hand now...”

“Yeah probably” Richie said and stared down at the nasty gash again.

Eddie stood up and walked to the kitchen, Richie close behind.

“Do you have any hydrogen peroxide? We should probably clean it before wrapping it up, just in case you itched your ass while I wasn’t looking...” Eddie teased him, lightening the mood.

“You didn’t give me much of a choice, considering you were staring at me the whole time!” He knew it wasn’t entirely true and it was more so the other way around, but he couldn’t help teasing him back.

“Fuck you, it wasn’t the *whole* time...” Richie just about died, this kid knew just what to fucking say to make Richie’s heart flutter right out of his chest.

“I can’t help it I’m so damn pretty” Richie flashed a smile at him behind his shoulder as he turned to walk into his bedroom,

destination being his master bathroom.

Richie grabbed all the shit they'd need to re-wrap his hand and said hi to Bowie before returning to the kitchen. Walking in to see Eddie scrubbing his hands at the sink. Richie couldn't help but watch the way his shoulders wiggled under his shirt. Everything that Eddie does could catch Richie in a trance, he moved with such purpose and fluidity, a contrast between Richie's awkward lanky movements, limbs, hands and feet too large and long to move around safely most of the time.

He dumped the stuff onto the counter and picked out the brown bottle of peroxide as he walked around the counter to Eddie near the sink. Eddie plucked the bottle from his hand and read the label.

"This is gonna fucking burn" Richie stared down at the gash.

"Not necessarily, but it might so prepare for the worst I guess..." Eddie pulled Richie's hand over the sink, Richie leaned over the counter and rest his elbows on the countertop next to the sink.

Eddie squirt some of the clear liquid over his hand and it felt like fucking acid.

"Oh *FUCK* it's the worst this is the worst!" Richie's whole body tensed to accommodate the pain.

Eddie rubbed circles into his back, "You'll be fine, it'll be over soon, it's good its burning, it's getting all the bad stuff out..." he drizzled more of the liquid over the cut. Richie sighed and tried to focus on the shapes that Eddie traced into his back.

Soon they were all done, and Richie's hand was wrapped and ready to go. The first thing he did with his newfound mobility was sit on the floor next to Winnow and scratch her belly, Richie couldn't fathom how he managed to get the top three most adorable things in the universe into his tiny apartment at the same time.

Some time later they found themselves sitting on the floor in the bathroom, spending time with Bowie, who walked back and forth

between them, swiping his body along their knees.

“I should probably go soon...” Eddie said a little sorrowfully, Richie was swooned by the fact that he didn’t really *want* to leave.

“Yeah, what time do you work tomorrow?” Richie had no shame about the eager tone in his voice.

“I think I get off at six again. If I’m wrong, I’ll let you know.” Eddie ran his hand down the length of Bowie’s back.

“Okay...any requests for dinner tomorrow?”

“The same thing we had tonight, considering it’s sitting in your fridge almost entirely uneaten.” Eddie teased.

“You got me there Kaspbrak...” Richie giggled.

Soon after Eddie was clipping the leash to Winnow’s collar and was headed towards the door, as he reached for the handle Richie grabbed his hand.

“Hey I’ll see you tomorrow okay?” Richie said.

“I wonder how many days in a row we’re going to say that...” Eddie smiled, his dimples framing his beautiful mouth.

Richie couldn’t help but plant a kiss on his cheek. Eddie squeezed his hand with a smirk and was soon out the door. As soon as it latched shut Richie frantically searched the apartment for his phone, finding it in the crack of the couch cushions. He thumbed to the favorites page of his contacts and called Bev, who answered on the third ring.

“Hey Honey, what’s up?”

“Bev I’m fucked...”

“What? Is everything okay? Do you need me to come over?” Her voice carried a flair of worry.

“Bevvie I’m falling in *love*...” Richie’s voice quite literally swooned.

“Oh Richie you scared the shit out of me!”

“Bevvie Baby he kissed me! Bevvie he kissed me, and it was the best kiss I’ve ever had in my life! Bevvie his dog is just *wonderful* a lovely red head, similar to yourself, just darling. Bevvie get this he said it was his FIRST KISS Bevvie his *FIRST KISS! Bevvie he’s all kinds of innocent and pure and it’s the most adorable thing ever Bev I think I’m going to fall in love with him Bevvie I can feel it in my bones!*” Richie was flailing around on the couch as he spoke.

“Richie its been three days” she giggled “don’t fall too hard...” the worry came back in her voice.

“I can’t help it Bev he’s just so perfect...” Richie felt as if he could feel his own pupils dilating just thinking about him.

“Okay lover boy...”

“Bevvie when we were like kissing, he made this sound and *OH MY GOD* music to my God damn *EARS!*” Richie was mostly reflecting on the night to himself through a conversation to Bev at this point.

“Add it to the spank bank and go jack off Richie” she laughed.

“I am going to be doing that so fucking much from here on out...” Richie wined.

“Not like you don’t already.”

Richie decided not to comment on the fact that the reasoning was that Eddie wanted to take his time with things.

“You’ve got a point there Bev” Richie laughed and rolled off of the couch onto the fluffy rug beneath.

“So, when am I gonna meet him?”

“I don’t know, hopefully soon, I think you two would hit it off...” Richie couldn’t help but smile at the idea “Stan too, we’ve got to get his ass involved with this introduction, the unveiling of a national treasure.”

“Man, you’ve got it bad huh...”

“Oh my god Bevvie you just wait...I can’t believe he is even hanging out with me let alone touching all over me.”

“Finally, you found someone to pet you, fucking golden retriever...”
Bev laughed her beautiful laugh and Richie couldn’t help but smile.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm vegan so I forgot what Crab Rangoon tastes like...

Also, I want to make it clear that I mean no harm with the descriptions of how Eddie and Richie feel about their sexuality, they are dealing with a lot of confusion and repression from toxic people around them.

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading!